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ABSTRACT

Today, nearly 1 billion adults are totally illiterate; the large majority are women. Varying and vague definitions of literacy abound in the literature and in practice. Literacy is only a potential tool that can be used for a variety of economic, social, political, and cultural purposes. Three principal state objectives for launching literacy programs may be sociopolitical, economic, and demand-meeting. National nongovernmental organizations often play an important role in the organization and teaching of adult literacy. Factors that explain low attendance and weak individual motivation are conditions of poverty in rural areas, lack of self-confidence, disillusionment, discouraging teaching methods, and lack of easy and useful reading material. Literacy strategies with major influence in developing countries are the following approaches: fundamental education, selective-intensive functional, conscientization, and mass campaign. Other literacy programs may differ from or borrow from the aforementioned approaches, and may focus on popular education, oneshot campaigns to eradicate illiteracy, eradication of illiteracy by a series of campaigns, general literacy programs, and/or selective small-scale programs. Post-literacy is important for motivation, for consolidating literacy, and for preventing relapse into illiteracy. A process of social change and mobilization is necessary to sustain women's participation. Crucial research areas include the impact and use of literacy, learning literacy in a second language, contents and methods, dropout, quality versus quantity, sponsorship, and organization of literacy. (127 references) (YLB)

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ADULT LITERACY IN THE THIRD WORLD

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A Review of Objectives and Strategies

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Adult Literacy in The Third World

A Review of Objectives and Strategies

Agneta Lind
Anton Johnston

SIDA
Swedish International Development Authority
Stockholm

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Preface

This study on objectives and strategies of adult literacy in the Third World was originally published in October 1986 by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) as a report in its Education Division Document series. It had been commissioned by SIDA as a contribution to the efforts of the International Working Group on Education, composed of education representatives of major donor agencies, to review different aspects of basic education and forms of development assistance to it.

Before the first October 1986 edition was published, drafts of the review had been distributed and commented upon by a number of aid agencies, specialized governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations from both South and North, as well as by individual specialists. The comments we received on the first draft, as well as on the published report, have been very positive and rewarding. The review has obviously filled a gap in the available literature on adult literacy. Many practitioners have pointed out that the conclusions of the review by and large correspond to their experiences. Our work has, furthermore, been kindly lauded by many readers, with comments such as: "a very balanced state of the art report", "a valuable compression of much of the current literature on literacy" and "a thoughtful and thorough piece of work". The demand for the review has been so large that it has been reprinted a number of times and is being translated into other languages. It is being used by educational planners and literacy trainers in many parts of the world.

This encouraging response led SIDA to request us to reedit the review into a book for still wider distribution in 1990, as a contribution to the UN-proclaimed International Literacy Year and the World Conference on Education for All. This decision should be seen as one of several manifestations of Sweden's long-term commitment to assisting the poorest Third World countries in the field of primary education and adult literacy. An important component of

SIDA's assistance to literacy work in the Third World is precisely to facilitate dissemination and exchange of literacy experiences.

This edition of our review has not been substantially changed compared to the earlier publication. It has been up-dated to a certain extent, and a chapter on women's experiences of participating in literacy programmes has been added, as well as a few short sections deriving from discussions on the earlier version of the review.

We are grateful for the positive reception and feed-back given to this review, manifest in its widespread demand and usage, and thank SIDA for deciding to sponsor this new edition.

Stockholm, December 1989.

Agneta Lind and Anton Johnston

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Summary

This summary is organized in the form of an abstract of each chapter in the document.

1. Purpose, Scope, and Limitations

This review on Adult Literacy has been commissioned by SIDA within the framework of the IWGE exchange of experiences on basic education in developing countries. The purpose is to give an account of and analyse existing experiences and research on Adult Literacy and its immediate follow-up, "post-literacy". A selection of sources and experiences is however necessary in a study like this. Our purpose has been to deal with the larger issues, such as objectives and strategies, rather than detailed descriptive accounts of many particular cases. Our selection of experiences and sources are determined by our own perceptions and backgrounds and are intended to represent different political and economic settings with divergent objectives, strategies and results in order to generalize them in a more theoretical way. Our limitations in time, location and backgrounds have led to a certain bias towards sources in English and geographically towards Eastern and Southern Africa as compared to for example sources in French on francophone countries.

We consider literacy as a basic human right that has to be struggled for collectively as a contribution to the creation of a more just society, within each nation and globally.

2. Literacy Statistics

There are about 900 million illiterate adults in the world. The highest illiteracy rates are found in the Least Developed Countries, mainly in Africa, and 60 per cent of all illiterates are women. In India and China about half of the world's illiterate adult population can be found.

This literacy data gives a general picture of the situation, in spite of several reasons for questioning the reliability of existing statistics, notably the following:

- the notion of literacy varies from country to country;
- the measures of literacy used are often very rough; and
- the coverage of the data is often incomplete.

3. Research and Evaluation of Adult Literacy

Adult Literacy is a relatively recent field of research and has been given little support compared to other issues in the social sciences. Attention has been focused on the methodology of teaching, including the choice of language of instruction, and on motivation for literacy at the level of individuals, communities and governments. One of the largest investments made in evaluation work was that linked to the UNDP/Unesco-promoted Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). More action-oriented or participatory forms of research on Adult Literacy have emerged since then. Evaluation studies are also provided by the sponsoring bodies or agencies running the literacy activities evaluated. Furthermore, important sources of experience and documentation derive from a number of international gatherings, where literacy work has been reported and discussed. Publications and networks for exchange of literacy experiences are promoted by the ICAE, DSE, Unesco (including the IIEP and the Institute of Education in Hamburg), UNICEF and others. Since it ceased to function, the role of the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Teheran has, however, unfortunately not been fully taken over by any other institute.

4. Definitions and Concepts of Literacy

In this chapter we first discuss the variety and vagueness of literacy definitions. It is pointed out that there is a gap between broader concepts of literacy and operational definitions necessary for evaluating literacy progress. Unesco's recommended definitions of literacy and functional literacy are quoted. The relativity of the concepts of eradication of illiteracy and literacy success are also discussed. Secondly, we try to summarize the development of internationally adopted concepts of literacy. We have identified four main periods, each representing a new trend:

- 1945–1964: "fundamental education", a term adopted to describe a broad field of development activities (eventually merged with the ideology of "community development"), whereof one was non-formal literacy programmes for adults and children. A broad concept of functional literacy (excluding numeracy), stressing the promotion of practical skills, emerged during this period, though the results of actual literacy activities were very poor.

- 1965–1974: "Functional literacy" within the framework of EWLP with strict economic growth aims, launched by Unesco and adopted internationally at the World Conference in Teheran in 1965. The idea was to experiment the economic returns of literacy, when linked to specific areas or target groups in industry or agriculture undergoing rapid development. The contents would centre around the production process of each project.

- 1975–1980: "A Turning Point for Literacy", expressed in the Declaration of Persepolis in 1975, in which literacy is critically reviewed and conceived as a political, human and cultural process of consciousness-raising and liberation. This turning point was influenced by the critical assessment of the EWLP made by UNPD/Unesco and by the Freire-inspired radical pedagogical movement of the early seventies. During this period it was agreed in the international literacy debate that literacy must be functional in a broad sense and that literacy is only one step towards achieving the various objectives set out.

- 1981–: "Education for All": the provision of "basic education" for all children and adults became a concern of the international community in the 1980's. Initially the mood of the late 1970's led to the promotion of mass adult literacy campaigns for the purpose of "eradicating illiteracy by the year 2000". As a result of the onset of grave economic recession in most of the Third World and its effects on all levels of education, attention turned more to trying to (re)gain the provision of UPE for children in a reformed, more "relevant" and cost-efficient primary school system.

5. Why Literacy?

In this chapter we include a historical perspective on literacy in today's industrialized countries. It shows that universal schooling and literacy have been linked to state formation, trade and cultural

exchange, urbanization and economic expansion. It also shows that literacy has been a subject of political struggle and conflict. Apart from the gradualist UPE strategy, there are a few historical examples of "accelerated" models that included specific *adult* literacy programmes. Finally we argue that the conditions of dependency and consequent economic and political constraints in the third world today hardly permit a smooth gradual universalization of literacy.

Furthermore we critically examine the validity of some arguments against large-scale efforts to promote adult literacy in developing countries. In doing this, we discuss the relationship between literacy and development, which is certainly dialectical and not a one-way causal link. We conclude that the question "Why Literacy?" can be answered with a wide range of justifications related to either basic values, such as human rights and equity, or assumed effects of literacy in different contexts, and that literacy in itself is only a potential tool that can be used for a variety of economic, social, political and cultural purposes, either through the process itself or through the utilization of acquired literacy skills.

6. State Objectives for Launching Literacy Programmes

The role of the state and its multiple, sometimes conflicting, motives for launching literacy programmes, is discussed in this chapter. Although most states declare a mixture of objectives when they formulate national literacy aims, in most cases one can detect what the principal objective is. We have distinguished between three principal state objectives: *socio-political* objectives (such as national unity, mass participation in on-going transformations, mobilization in support of a new regime), which are often the driving force behind mass literacy campaigns; *economic* objectives, promoting a process of gradual improvement of living standards, which can either result in selective work-oriented programmes within specific development projects or in a more general programme as one of several inputs to build economic growth; and *demand-meeting* objectives, often in a context of relatively low priority to literacy, but where provision is made through state services in response to public and/or international demand. Finally, the role of international agencies in determining the objectives of literacy programmes is briefly discussed.

7. The Role of National NGOs

In this short chapter we show that national NGOs often play an important role in the organization and teaching of adult literacy, either together with state-promoted literacy work, or independently, in some cases as part of a popular struggle against oppression. We conclude that the community-based nature of the NGO and thus of the activity constitute its strength, but largely define its limits in dealing with the task of literacy as a whole.

8. Individual Motivation for Literacy

In this chapter we discuss the rather weak response among adult illiterates to literacy programmes if there are no specific efforts for mobilization towards creating motivation. The problem of large drop-out and low attendance rates after initial mobilization and enrollment is also analyzed. The conditions of poverty in rural areas, lack of self-confidence, disillusion regarding the benefits from literacy learning, discouraging teaching methods, and the lack of easy and useful reading material are factors that explain low attendance and weak "motivation". The participation and motivation of women is finally discussed specifically. In some countries, far more women than men register for literacy classes, but the general oppressed situation of women prevents them from attending classes regularly and lead to high drop-out rates and poor achievement compared to men. Some examples that show the liberating potential of literacy for women are mentioned.

9. Literacy Strategies – Implementation and Results

This is the most extensive chapter of the document, starting with an analysis of the nature of literacy strategies, i.e. models of planning and implementation of literacy programmes/campaigns, guided by priority aims. Although there certainly exist mixtures and variations of each strategy (or "approach"), we have distinguished a number of approaches, that have had or still have major influence in the third world:

- The '*Fundamental Education*' approach, promoted by Unesco during the period 1946–1964. Within this framework, attention was focused on finding the most effective methods of teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue. The conclusions from an extensive study thereof showed however that

there is no universally applicable method. The contribution of 'Fundamental Education' programmes to literacy was very poor. It seems as if many of the necessary elements of a whole literacy strategy were neglected. Although this approach is not advocated today, several current literacy programmes continue to retain preoccupations similar to 'Fundamental Education'. These general literacy programmes have, however, advanced beyond their original in many aspects.

- The '*Selective-Intensive Functional*' approach launched as an experimental programme, within the framework of EWLP, in eleven countries from 1967 to 1972, with the support of UNDP and Unesco. The main objective was to evaluate the link between literacy and economic development, but it was also hoped that the EWLP would prepare the way for the eradication of mass illiteracy. The main concerns were two: the functional (work-oriented) content, and evaluation. Unesco/ UNDP's own critical assessment of the EWLP is summarized in this sub-chapter. The evaluation approach itself was severly critized. Furthermore, available data on literacy results indicated high drop-out rates and low success rates, except in Tanzania. Some of the general conclusions from the experience were: Literacy activities must not be viewed as an essentially technical exercise – social, cultural and political factors are as important, if not more; literacy must be integrated in a national plan of development where the political will to implement literacy is clearly articulated; and literacy must often be linked to economic and social reforms. "Functional Literacy" or the Economic Literacy approach has continued to be applied in many countries, with some modifications resulting from the EWLP experience. The concept of "Functionality" has in effect been broadened, but the basic ideological underpinning (human capital theory) and the economic objectives remain essentially the same. Problems encountered in programmes applying this approach are linked to the lack of an atmosphere of mobilization and priority, and the tendency to try to achieve too many things at the same time.

- The '*Conscientization*' approach, of which Paulo Freire is the major spokesman. His literacy theory and practice have inspired many progressive adult educators, especially in Latin America. The main objectives are linked to a process of liberating critical consciousness, and dialogue and participation are key elements of the pedagogy. In this sub-chapter some critical issues and problems concerning the interpretation and

application of "conscientization"-oriented literacy are analysed, such as its political implications. Furthermore, we mention some practical difficulties in implementing the Freirean literacy approach, such as defining programmes on the basis of local participatory investigations, and applying a true reciprocal dialogue, especially in the context of large-scale national programmes. We conclude that Freire provides an important source of critical reflection and inspiration for literacy practitioners, but that the approach does not provide sufficient guidelines for a whole literacy strategy, and contains certain non-applicable elements.

- The '*Popular Education*' approach, which is developing mainly in Latin America, is briefly discussed.

- The '*Mass Campaign*' approach, implemented particularly in revolutionary societies. This strategy seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation literate within a particular time-frame and is often part of a policy for overcoming poverty and injustice through mass mobilization. This sub-chapter is introduced by an overview of recent international moves to promote mass campaigns. We have identified two distinct literacy campaign strategies, which are discussed separately:

- '*One-off' campaigns to eradicate illiteracy*, of which there are only a few examples (Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Somalia). They all successfully carried out mass campaigns over a period of one to two years. The factors for their success are analysed, such as the momentum of commitment, resulting from the recent conquest of power by a popular movement; the relatively low rate of illiteracy; the existence of one principal majority language, and the effective mobilization of all human, institutional and material resources needed. The level of literacy attained is necessarily low and the sustaining of literacy becomes a problem.

- '*Eradication of illiteracy by a series of campaigns*', a strategy that became frequent during the seventies, for example in Tanzania, Burma, Ethiopia and Mozambique. This step-wise strategy is determined by the existence of a very low level of development and a very large number of illiterates, which makes reaching all of them at once very hard. Literacy has not been an absolute priority compared to other urgent needs and the diversity of languages has complicated the implementation. (Tanzania had the advantage of having an African lingua

franca, Swahili). In the Tanzanian and Ethiopian cases, the strategy has been successful in keeping up participation, but in other cases it has been more difficult. This strategy is, otherwise, similar to the "one-off" strategy in many aspects, such as objectives, organization and content, that stress political mobilization. Tanzania is interesting for having combined a political and directly Functional curriculum.

- *'General Literacy Programmes'* with fairly diverse objectives. They are often large-scale, but "politically cool" programmes, that provide access to those who want literacy. Examples can be found in Botswana, Brasil, India, and Mexico, among others, where illiteracy is not seen as an immediate major obstacle to the economy. The lack of strong social pressure and mobilization for literacy at all levels of the society, often results in a high initial enrollment, followed by a very large drop-out. NGOs often play an important role. Much effort and resources are put into curriculum design and methodology. It is not unusual that too many goals are expected to be reached by one literacy course.

- *'Selective small scale programmes'* are mainly of two types: state-promoted activities in specific areas, for development or pilot project purposes; and NGO or community-promoted activities. Small scale projects have certain potential advantages, but they do not create significant reduction of national illiteracy rates.

10. Post–literacy

In this chapter, we stress the importance of post-literacy as an immediate follow-up programme to literacy, as a motivational factor for literacy, for consolidating literacy and for preventing relapse into illiteracy. Various forms of post-literacy are analysed, the more formal one through entry into higher grades of the school–system, the "structured" one, designed specifically for adult new-literates and the "semi-structured" form of post-literacy, an organized project for putting learning materials into the hands of adults, without a direct teaching component – an indispensable complement to the other forms of post-literacy. The experience of post-literacy in Ethiopia is interesting in that all three forms of post-literacy are being implemented at the same time. Finally, we argue that the introduction of post-literacy opportunities *before* even starting the literacy project itself, seems to be a good idea.

11. Women's Literacy Participation

Women often constitute the majority of literacy learners. However, in order to sustain women's participation, and overcome male resistance, a process of social change and mobilization is necessary. A common problem is that literacy programmes, often integrated with other project activities, seldom adapt to women's real learning needs. Not enough attention is given to the literacy component or to special measures to mobilize women's participation. Thus irregular attendance, high dropout and weak results are common. Successful examples demonstrate the importance of participation, awareness-raising, and creative organizational approaches. They also show that literacy is a potential tool for women's empowerment, even though literacy in itself is not enough to counteract the submission of women in the environment of poverty and oppressive traditions.

12. Conclusions and Reflections on Existing Experience

This chapter is in itself a synthesis, that needs reading in order to get an idea of the document as whole. It identifies a series of factors for relative success of large-scale literacy activities. The active role of the state and "political will" are pointed out as necessary elements of large-scale programmes. When the objective is to eradicate illiteracy, it is also necessary to combine UPE and adult literacy. We also discuss other key issues, regardless of the scale of a programme, that in the context of a favourable situation of motivation and mobilization, are important for the success of literacy, although we basically contend that adult literacy is a political rather than a technical issue. We take up the questions of choice of language, mobilization and training of teachers, contents and methods, and costs and resources.

Concerning research needs, we argue that there is need for many different approaches, as long as they are used creatively and adapted in a sensitive way to reality. We contend that literacy data should reflect gender differences, that pilot projects are useful for research and innovation, that the political nature of literacy and tensions linked to literacy activities need to be taken into account in research. We also find it essential that literacy research is rooted among those concerned in the 3rd World. There is a need for new research "clearing houses" for adult literacy. Furthermore, we have selected some themes whose research we consider essential, such as: the

impact and use of literacy; learning literacy in a second language/ transition from mother-tongue to second-language literacy; contents and methods; drop-out; quality versus quantity; sponsorship and organization of literacy.

Finally we point out that the priority and application of research depends on in what context and for what purpose it is done. Research serves best as an integrated component of the planning, implementation and critical evaluation of adult literacy activities. We cannot expect to arrive at a global adult literacy cookbook!

1. Introduction: Purpose, Scope and Limitations of the Review

During its meeting in Paris in October 1984, the International Working Group on Education (IWGE), composed of international aid agencies' education representatives, identified a number of research areas meriting special attention as part of their endeavour to strengthen basic education provision in developing countries. SIDA, with its long history of support to adult education projects, offered to be the executive agency in the review of the field of literacy and post-literacy, and commissioned the authors to write this study through the Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm.

The preparation of such a review, which is intended to cover an extremely wide field of activities, necessarily involves a great deal of selection and generalization. As the authors of the paper, we wish to state that such a process means that unavoidably our own ideological perceptions, personal experience in the field, and location in Sweden have all had a part to play in what we know about, what we are interested in, what we have selected (or left out), what we have had access to, and how we have chosen to organize, generalize and theorize the review. We do not wish to create any illusions as to the "complete objectivity" of this paper, and we are sure that any other authors, given the same task, would similarly pass the information available through the filters of their own perceptions.

We will thus try here to give an indication of just which "filters" we have used, for readers to be forewarned!

Firstly, we have concentrated on *adult* literacy and its immediate follow-up, "post-literacy", in so-called "developing countries". Literacy and post-literacy are but one part of adult basic education, and are mostly set in a "non-formal" context. This study makes no attempt to cover the literacy and post-literacy teaching functions of formal primary education for children, although schools are indispensable in providing literacy or "basic education" as a whole. However, we have pointed out where it seemed relevant, the links between formal schooling and literacy, and between literacy and other aspects of adult basic education, such as health education or

training in agricultural skills. Without implying that adult literacy activities are isolated from other forms of education or from their social context, we are convinced that adult literacy training represents a specific area of activity which is complicated and difficult enough to merit its own analytical review.

Secondly, it would be both improductive and impossible to try to cover all existing experiences, reports, research and evaluation work in a study like this. Our purpose has been to try to deal with the larger issues in literacy work, such as objectives and related strategies, rather than particular detailed accounts of various specific literacy experiences. Thus we have selected a number of cases of literacy activities from different political and economic settings which represent divergent objectives, strategies and results, and used them to generalize in a more theoretical way. In particular, we have given most prominence to literacy activities which have involved, or attempted to involve, a relatively large number of illiterate people.

Some of the factors constraining the selection have been our own previous field experience, and our present location in Sweden. Our field experience has mainly been in Southern Africa, notably Mozambique, and much of our previous reading and study has concentrated on Africa. Works on adult literacy available in Sweden are mostly in English, which means that we have taken few cases from Francophone sources. We have looked at (mostly English, and some Spanish) sources on Latin America and Asia, but, in the former case, there is a vast amount of experience in the field of adult education to which we have not had ready access. We should add that SIDA's own relative concentration of activity on Eastern and Southern Africa, and to a lesser extent, on South Asia, has also contributed to our own access to materials on, and bias towards these areas – where, after all, the highest illiteracy rates and largest numbers of illiterates are to be found. It is also a limitation of this review that a fairly large amount of literacy work takes place as a sub-component of "integrated rural development projects" and is reported on as such, which makes it difficult for the researcher on adult literacy to pick up the references involved.

Thirdly, we should present our ideological filters. We regard adult literacy – and all education – as performing both reproductive and innovative functions in society, with a constant potential for conflict between the two functions. This means that literacy activities have a strong political and ideological character: the aims and objectives, the forms of delivery/acquisition, the methods, the contents, the

results, and the links between the activity and the economy and society, all derive from essentially political goals and political struggles and conflicts. We think that the learning of literacy can be important for the fight of the exploited classes against oppression, but are also sure that it can be used as a form of social control to undermine this struggle. We think that literacy is a basic human right and should be treated as such, and that, as a right, it has to be struggled for. Ideally, we would like to see the masses conquer the right to literacy and the skill itself on their own initiative. However, in an unequal world, new skills have in part to be, or will be, provided by others, and we think that this provision is worthy of support unless it is clearly destined to increase the disadvantages of the acquirers or to subvert efforts to conquer more social and economic justice.

Nonetheless, we insist that "the illiterate" should not be considered the bearer of a disease, to be treated by a "vaccination campaign". Illiteracy is a symptom, not a cause of underdevelopment, injustice and poverty. Nor should literacy be treated as a "medicine" for the complaints of society; we do not believe that the simple provision of literacy training in itself will transform the lives and social and economic relations of the illiterate population. Without literacy being integrated into a general process of social change, or into a social movement dedicated to creating social change, it is clear that it will have little chance of changing the fundamental parameters of life. Literacy training in a stagnated rural milieu is hardly even meaningful, and it will be treated as such by the community.

From these perceptions, we regard literacy as being a collective enterprise which should contribute to creating a more just society. We look rather askance on formulations which site literacy's importance within the bounds of "successful investment in human capital", "contribution to individual productivity and well-being", "essential element in individual modernity" (etc.), even if someone were able to demonstrate all these attributes empirically ... Literacy is a tool with many potential uses, as a hoe may be used to plough, to weed, to reap, or to destroy. We would like to see literacy used for the collective good of all, rather than as a means for the "individual" to scramble to a well-fed sinecure at the expense of the "less talented", even though there may well be economic and status-seeking motives on the part of its individual consumers.

We may then be asked: how much of this paper is scientific, and how much is just opinions? While most literacy practitioners (and, one hopes, social scientists) will smile at the question, yet it still needs to

be answered. We have tried to use concrete cases and documentation as direct evidence for most assertions, and to give references as to where more detail can be found on each case. When it comes to pulling together the strands from many cases and numbers of ideas, theories and attitudes into a theoretical whole, however, one gets even further away from "empirical facts" than is implied in the process of selecting and analysing particular cases. To some, this is "theory" which remains to be proved or disproved; to others, it is ideology/opinion/bias; but at least to some it gives a way of looking at and interpreting a very diffuse reality ("mega-variate", if you like) that may be insightful and useful. We hope we have done a good enough job for the last category to be in the majority!

2. Literacy Statistics

2.1 The Data

The number of illiterates aged 15 and upwards continues to rise inexorably in absolute terms. According to the latest estimates there were around 760 million illiterates in 1970 and around 889 million in 1985, and unless radical measures are taken, their numbers will have topped the 900 million mark by the end of this century (Unesco 1983, 1985). In percentage terms the situation is progressively improving with the world illiteracy rate falling from some 44 % in 1950 to 33 % in 1970 and according to the estimates to 25 % in 1990 (Bataille 1976; Unesco 1980). The increase in absolute numbers is a result of population growth together with the incomplete coverage of primary schooling for school-age children. In 1980, 121 million school-age children (between 6 and 11) did not attend school (Unesco 1983). These children and those who drop out before consolidating literacy skills will at age 15 be counted into the illiterate adult population.

Predictably, the illiteracy rates are highest in the least developed countries and among the poorest and most underprivileged people. In 1985, India and China by themselves accounted respectively for about 30 % and 26 % of all the illiterate people in the world.

In the 25 least developed countries (with a per capita product of less than 100 US dollars per year) the illiteracy rate was more than 80 % in 1970 (Bataille 1976) and around 68 % in 1985 (Unesco 1985). These countries tend also to have the highest population growth rates. Further, the proportion of women illiterates is steadily growing. In 1960, 58 % of illiterates were women; by 1970 this percentage had risen to 60 %; and by 1985 it had gone up to 63 % (Unesco 1972; 1985).

Another indicator of the widening gap between men and women is the female share in the total increase of illiteracy among the adult population (15 years and above) between 1960 and 1985; 133 million out of a total increase of 154 million illiterates (86 per cent) were

women. In absolute numbers the greatest increase of women's illiteracy was in Asia, with an increase of 109 million in this period. In Africa the numbers are smaller due to the smaller total population, but the increase rate was largest. The number of illiterate women in Africa rose by 44 % (from 68 to 98 million) between 1960 and 1985. The increase among the male illiterate population is significantly smaller. In Latin America the increase in itself was insignificant and the difference between men and women in this respect negligible (Unesco 1985).

The distribution of adult illiteracy in the world is shown in the table below. The gap between men and women is indicated by the difference between the illiteracy rates.

Number of illiterates and illiteracy rate in 1985 for the adult population aged 15 and over (Unesco 1985).

	Absolute number of illiterates 15 and over (in millions)	Illiteracy rates (% points)			Female rate minus male rate (% points)
		Total	M	F	
World total	888.7	27.7	20.5	34.9	14.4
Developing countries	868.9	38.2	27.9	48.9	21.0
Least developed countries	120.8	67.6	56.9	78.4	21.5
'Developed' countries	19.8	2.1	1.7	2.6	0.9
Africa	161.9	54.0	43.3	64.5	21.2
Latin America	43.6	17.3	15.3	19.2	3.9
Asia	665.7	36.3	25.6	47.4	21.8

Fisher (1982) attempts to quantify the degree of social, cultural and economic deprivation of countries whose population is highly illiterate (i.e. with an adult illiteracy rate higher than 66 %) by comparing them with countries having largely literate population (i.e. less than 34 % illiteracy). He arrived at the conclusion:

> "The indicators examined all point in the same direction: the 'have nots' in terms of literacy are also worse off in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, educational provision, communications, nutrition, health services, food production and income; their industry is less developed, their agriculture is less productive. But this is only part of the tragic reality, for within these countries with high illiteracy rates ... the illiterate is even worse off than his compatriots." (p. 161).

In accordance with our basic theory on education and society we do not adhere to the view that these relationships imply that illiteracy is one of the reasons for underdevelopment, as stated by Unesco (1983). Illiteracy should instead be seen as one of many symptoms of underdevelopment and is therefore dependent on the whole socio-economic and political situation. Indeed, all recent literature on literacy seems to agree that illiteracy must not be viewed as a problem in isolation.

2.2 Are the Data Reliable?

All literature dealing with literacy statistics points out their limited significance. Nevertheless, although it is important to be aware of existing reasons for the limitations of the data, our general analysis will not alter, whether there be 800 million or 1000 million illiterates.

There are three main reasons to question available statistics:

a) **The notion of literacy varies from country to country.** Whatever definition of literacy for example Unesco decides on, each nation uses its own criteria in practice. Thus the comparability of national literacy statistics suffers from the lack of common minimum standards.

b) **The measures of literacy used are often very rough.** "Often, literacy statistics are derived from a census on the educational profile of a society. Less frequently, they are based upon the respondent's self-assessment in response to a question such as 'Are you able to read?'. Far less frequently, they are based upon performance indicators: 'What does this say?'" (Gillette and Ryan, 1983).

Concerning the limitations of estimates and forecasts on literacy rates, Unesco (1980) says they:

> "are based exclusively on observed trends in regard to school activities. This may give rise to errors in the following two cases: (a) whenever large-scale out- of-school programmes are implemented, (b) whenever plans are made to step up and/or improve formal education, since a large number of children would be affected and/or reach a standard which would enable them to be considered literate." (p. 16).

In spite of these possible errors, other factors connected to the frequent use of formal education data for estimating literacy statistics seem to cause under-estimates rather than over-estimates of the number of illiterates. In the words of Gillette and Ryan (1983):

> "Schooling may produce literacy, but experience shows that such attainments are highly perishable if there are no regular opportunities to read and write. Hence, while there may be some who progress from illiteracy to literacy as a result of informal learning ... there are many more who relapse from literacy into illiteracy." (p. 1).

c) **The coverage of the data is often incomplete.** The data disseminated by the Unesco Office of Statistics do not provide information for example on the breakdown of illiterates by area of residence or by linguistic groups. Data are sometimes only based on average figures for a country as a whole, which conceal "pockets" of illiteracy, resulting from existing disparities within individual countries (Unesco, 1980).

Moreover, statistics may include a certain amount of political polishing in order to show national progress.

In order to get a realistic and more reliable idea of the literacy situation it is necessary to decide what level of literacy we consider to be of interest. In this respect it is significant that the world illiteracy rate given for 1975 was 33 % while at the same time it was said that around 65 % were not able to use the written word in practice (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

3. Research and Evaluation Studies on adult Literacy

Reviews of literacy research point out that Adult Literacy is a relatively recent field of research compared to other areas of education or social science studies. For nearly a century a vast and growing volume of educational research has been concentrated on child development and teaching in schools. "In comparison with other issues in the social sciences little support has been given to research on adult literacy." (ICAE, 1979, p.6).

The research on the teaching-learning process of reading is an illustrative example, where the concentration on pre-school and school children is striking. In Gray's extensive study (Gray, 1969) only 13 works on adult reading are to be found, while hundreds of studies on child reading are referred to. This is confirmed in Gorman (1977): "There is little in current research that might be directly applied toward teaching adults to read." (ICAE, 1979, p. 6).

As many studies note (e.g. Verner, 1974; Gorman, 1977; ICAE, 1979; Wagner 1987), much of the reading research is basically irrelevant to Third World adult literacy problems. Wagner (1987, p.13) explains this:

> "One prime reason for this paradox ... is that researchers have been motivated more by theoretically derived questions than by research questions based on policy needs .... Thus a great deal of time and effort has been expended on testing the advantages and disadvantages of teaching through "sounding-out" (phonics) versus "whole-word" method for English-speaking children, while only a fraction of effort has been used to study the conditions that lead individuals to seek literacy training, the latter being a critical determinant in adult literacy programs."

In an introduction to theoretical perspectives on comparative literacy studies, Scribner (in Wagner, 1987) suggests that there is "an unresolved and underlying tension between models of literacy based on studies of psychological processes and models based on social processes at the macro-level. They do not seem to fit together into a larger picture, and sometimes generate conflicting implications for literacy programs and policies" (p. 19). She observes that one source

of tension may be between the psychologists' emphasis on looking for universal lingusitic and cognitive processes implicated in literacy acquisition and the social scientists' stress on the variety of social forces that generate and sustain literacy activities.

Most research and analyses on adult literacy in the Third World date from the mid-1960s and onwards. Since then many research or evaluation experiences have developed and a core of literacy specialists, most of them from the third world, has been established. They were themselves involved in literacy work and are not a separate corps of academic analysts.

Prior to this period the most important contributions to existing knowledge and understanding of adult literacy in the Third World were made by Dr Frank C. Laubach and Dr William S. Gray. Dr Laubach, a US missionary, was the first literacy campaign promoter to have great international impact. He devoted himself to adult literacy work in the 1930s and 1940s in Asia, South America and Africa. *Teaching the World to Read – A Handbook for Literacy Campaigns* (Laubach, 1947) is a pioneer book in the field. Dr Gray's work on literacy methodology, in *The Teaching of Reading and Writing* (Gray, 1969), is the most thorough and vast study of its kind.

The methodology of teaching literacy has continued to be a theme given attention by more recent research, including the choice of language of instruction. Motivation for literacy, at the level of individuals, communities and governments, is the theme that accounts for and runs through much of the recent studies on literacy. Some studies have also centred around the problem of retention of literacy. Existing studies and reports are moreover largely concentrated on the countries that have had major campaigns or programmes, such as Vietnam, Cuba, China, Tanzania, Somalia, Brazil, India.

Three main types of research on adult literacy have been conducted:

1) **Experimental research** representing long term investigations designed to test hypotheses. The most notable example of this kind of research was the evaluation work related to Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). Unesco has published a list of 229 documents and reports from the EWLP experiences carried out in eleven countries. Apart from this major piece of research this kind of "experimental" research on adult literacy is rare.

2) Various forms of **participatory research**. This has been a frequently-used research method from the beginning of the 1970s, with the studies conducted essentially by activists working in the field. The participatory research approach owes much to the ideas of the Brazilian literacy pedagogue Paulo Freire, and have been much developed in Latin America in the context of popular education projects at the community level (see Erasmie and de Vries, 1981). The approach has been used for two distinct purposes in the context of literacy:

   - more commonly, for the so-called "community survey" which should antecede a Freirean type literacy project, and which seeks to identify the most important aspects and contradictions of community life and the level of social awareness, in order to select out the themes and generative words which will constitute the literacy "curriculum";
   - less often, where the researcher is a participant (or, ideally, *all* the participants), and the research activity seeks to assist in laying bare local reality and in maintaining a continuous joint evaluation of the literacy programme and its social insertion; the research is based on the praxis of action-reflection-action, and should immediately assist in changing the process towards the better attainment of its objectives.

3) Various forms of **evaluation studies**, measuring the achievements of a programme against its objectives. Some of the evaluation studies linked to EWLP belong to this category, as well as reports made by government bodies or agencies running the literacy activity evaluated.

Important sources of experiences and documentation on adult literacy in the Third World derive from a number of international conferences, workshops and seminars, where literacy work has been reported and discussed. The reports from these meetings express general findings and conclusions on a number of important factors. The international network for exchange of literacy experiences has developed since 1970 through new international, regional and national institutions and organizations. The International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Teheran played a very important role through its publications between 1970 and 1980. The International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), coordinating regional and national councils, provides an important network of information and exchange of experiences. The German Foundation for International

Development (DSE) has promoted many important seminars and publications on literacy in the Third World. Unesco has extended its role by the recent involvement of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in adult literacy planning and administration. The Unesco Institute of Education in Hamburg has also undertaken important research and development work in the areas of literacy and post-literacy.

4. Definitions and Concepts of Literacy

4.1 The Scope of Definitions

Varying and often vague definitions of literacy abound in literature and in praxis. We do not intend to make a list of available definitions. We will rather try to delineate major trends in the development of the concept.

The concept of literacy in the literature is often a mixture of values, objectives, functions, methods, and levels and contents of skills required. It is surprising how seldom the different components necessary for a clear definition are explicitly accounted for when literacy is discussed. Definitions made by Unesco or others in literature seldom correspond to the operational criteria used in practice in different countries or programmes.

It is natural that literacy cannot simply be defined in operational terms without connecting it to its purposes or its context. It is also true, however, that criteria used in practice for evaluating literacy are overwhelmingly limited to simple operational or quantitative definitions, without considering the broader objectives and meanings of literacy, simply because it is extremely difficult or impossible to measure the broader impact of literacy isolated from other environmental effects.

Thus it is important to bear this in mind when we present broader concepts of literacy. Generally one could say that there exists a gap between broad definitions elaborating on the role of literacy and operational definitions aiming at measuring certain skills related to literacy. This gap certainly exists in practice. The broader definitions might influence the approach (contents, methods, etc.) to dealing with illiteracy, but very seldom the criteria for evaluating literacy.

Before presenting an overview of major trends concerning the concept of literacy, we consider it necessary to give a brief idea of what

we mean by a literate person. Unesco's latest recommendation (Unesco, 1978) distinguishes between *literacy* and *functional literacy*, the first referring to what we would like to call *basic literacy*. According to Unesco a person is literate "who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life". We will use the concept of basic literacy as meaning the first step on the way to achieving a more functional or applicable level of skills, including or not basic numeracy. A *functionally literate* person must be able to "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development" (Unesco, 1978). In more precise terms 'functional' literacy varies depending on the environment and the context in each given society at a given time. As we shall see further on, 'functional literacy' as used here is not equal to Functional Literacy as conceived in the Experimental World Literacy Program, EWLP.

We will also be using two other terms for describing certain stages of the literacy process. A *semi-literate* person is able to decipher a few simple words and write his/her own name and/or to make simple calculations in written form. In other words a semi-literate person has started but not completed the process of basic literacy. A person who has just achieved *basic literacy* we will call *new-literate* (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

We should note two other terminological and practical difficulties. The first is the general concept of "eradication of illiteracy". In reality, no country has ever eradicated illiteracy, as there always remains a part of the population which is for one reason or another not reached by literacy, e.g. people with learning handicaps, people who come out of years of schooling without ever having become literate, and so on. Thus in practice the term has come to refer to reducing illiteracy to a very low level overall, to about 8 percent or below. In the Third World, the term comes to be even more loosely applied, as the business of counting and checking is more difficult there and the conditions of life make universal coverage problematic. Most countries seem to be on the way to "eradication" when the level falls below 20 percent. It should be pointed out that often the counting covers people who had the opportunity to become literate, or who passed some form of literacy test, and does not reflect such problems as "new illiterates" who did not get to school after the adult literacy effort finished, or those who "relapse into illiteracy" after completing a programme successfully.

The second is precisely the problem of what to call a "literacy success". "Success" is a relative word, which could be judged in *individual* terms by passing a test, or by degree of retention of the skill, or by degree of use of the skill, or by whether people also make use of other skills/knowledge learnt in the process of literacy. Normally little attempt is made to estimate the level of success on anything other than passing the final test. Even so, in terms of rating a *programme* successful, it is important to note that most adult literacy programmes have a level of "efficiency" of 30 percent or even well below that, counting between initial enrollment and those who "pass" the final literacy test. Only a few very large national mass campaigns has historically done much better than that (e.g. Cuba, Nicaragua and Ethiopia). Thus a programme should not be judged "unsuccessful" on the basis of too demanding criteria! Where strides towards eradicating illiteracy have been made, it has usually been by incorporating very large numbers of people in each stage of the total effort and "passing" a low proportion, and not by "passing" a large percentage of a smaller number enrolled.

4.2 Internationally Adopted Concepts of Literacy

Two major assumptions have guided Unesco in its promotion of literacy ever since 1945:

1) **Illiteracy is a major obstacle to 'development'.** Hence, literacy is an instrument for development. This assumption has been constant, but to what degree and how literacy and development relate has been debated and looked upon differently over time. Recent views expressed are as for example in *Objective: Literacy* (1983):

   "...the eradication of illiteracy does not banish deprivation over-night. But by eliminating one obstacle to development it will indirectly help to improve living and working conditions." (p. 7).

2) **Literacy is a fundamental human right.** Illiteracy in the world must therefore be eliminated.

The international literacy trends can be divided into roughly four periods, 1945–1964, 1965–1974, 1975–1980 and 1981–.

1945–1964. The traditional concept of literacy, referring simply to reading and writing skills as an end in itself, was abandoned in

theory by Unesco shortly after its creation. In 1946 the term *fundamental education* was adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, whereof one was non-formal literacy programmes for children and adults. Gray (1969) summarizes the very broad concept of 'fundamental education':

> "...fundamental education is often the first stage in organized efforts to promote personal development and community progress. From the outset, it stimulates awareness of individual and group possibilities. Such an awakening may occur in a single activity, such as a health demonstration project. In the course of time, however, it spreads to other activities. In so far it includes the knowledge and skills usually acquired in school, fundamental education tries to develop them according to the needs and interests of the people concerned. Thus people are taught to read and write only when they recognize that these skills are necessary to the fuller attainment of their purposes." (p. 17).

Myrdal (1968) points out that "fundamental education" or "social education" became merged with so-called "community development". The ideologists of the community development movement stressed that literacy must be used for something of practical importance in order to produce development. Myrdal (1968) agreed, but added that this should be equally relevant to teaching in primary schools. Myrdal concluded:

> "The disquieting fact is, however, that comparatively little has been done to reform the schools and make them more responsive to practical needs, while adult education has been either neglected altogether or turned into something so 'practical' that it no longer encompasses any serious attempt to make people literate." (p. 1687).

Later on (Chapter 9.2) we will discuss the poor results in attaining literacy during this period. We will here discuss how literacy itself was conceived.

Already during this period the distinction was made between 'minimum standards of literacy' and 'functional literacy' with basically the same meaning as given recently by Unesco (see beginning of this chapter), with the exception that numeracy was not included in the definition of 'functional literacy'.

The limitations of providing only minimum standards was very clear:

> "if training is discontinued... the trainees... soon lose whatever ability to read and write they may have acquired." (Gray, 1969, p. 21).

The concept of functional literacy evolved gradually during this period.

The criteria used for measuring 'functional literacy' vary from duration of training, through the specific contents and methods considered necessary, to specific tests evaluating the literacy abilities.

A more common criterion used is, however, the equivalence to a certain number of completed years of schooling. Four years of schooling have often been proposed as a minimum standard for functional literacy. Arguments against this criterion have been presented by many authors, one being the insufficient and uneven quality of primary schooling.

The level of functional literacy required in a society varies and changes, which means that no fixed or general equivalence to formal schooling can really be given.

Gray (1969) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of setting minimum standards or high standards. He argues:

> "When defining a satisfactory criterion for literacy, it is essential to adopt a relatively high standard, for there is very little printed matter related to adult needs and interests which can be read by anyone who has not acquired the reading ability normally attained by children, who have had four or even five years of schooling. So much time and energy are expended in preparing less difficult material that it cannot be produced in sufficient quantity to supply adult needs." (pp. 26–27).

He concludes finally that literacy programmes should be organized in a series of stages.

In summary, over 1945-1964, Unesco promoted literacy as part of a broader education programme, called 'fundamental education' stressing the promotion of practical skills, for development purposes. Literacy itself was conceived as exclusively reading and writing skills, preferably acquired through learning in the mother tongue. Distinction was already made between basic literacy and 'functional literacy'. The concepts used today were evolved. Numeracy was, however, not yet included in the definitions of 'functional literacy'.

1965-1974. As a consequence of the poor literacy achievements in the past, and on the basis of a series of studies and activities directed by Unesco to the problem of adult literacy programmes, Unesco decided in 1964 to launch an Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) in order to find ways of transforming literacy into an effective instrument for social and economic development. A new "functional literacy approach" was defined.

The World Conference of Ministers of Education on Eradication of Illiteracy, held in Teheran in 1965, gave international expression to

this approach. As to the concept and aims of literacy it stated that Functional literacy should:

> "...not be confined to the teaching of reading and writing but should include professional and technical knowledge thus promoting a fuller participation by adults in economic and civic life ... be related to the pursuit of economic and social objectives (increase of manpower output, production of food stuffs, industrialization, social and professional mobility, creation of additional manpower, diversification of the economy, etc.)" (Unesco, 1968, p. 48).

> "...lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training of work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life and a better understanding of the surrounding world, and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture." (Unesco/UNDP, 1976).

Compared to previous declared aims and concepts, Functional literacy now stressed strict economic growth aims such as increased productivity and consequently included vocational subjects in the literacy programmes. The political and cultural aims seem to have been given much less weight.

Each literacy programme would be linked to a specific economic project in industry or agriculture in areas undergoing rapid economic expansion. The contents would centre around the production process linked to each project.

This approach was based on the assumption that the population groups working in fields of economic priority would have the greatest need of becoming literate. The motivation problem would therefore not constitute an obstacle.

1975-1980. In the light of a critical assessment of the results of EWLP and the very concept of its "functional approach", and in view of other experiences and theories, a review of the literacy concept in all its aspects characterized this period.

The International Symposium for Literacy in Persepolis held in September 1975 on the tenth anniversary of the Teheran Conference, intended to evaluate the results of a decade of international reflection and action on literacy teaching. It adopted the "Declaration of Persepolis", which presented a whole new ideology on literacy including its objectives, requisites, contents, methods and means.

It stressed the political, human and cultural aspects of literacy. It is radically different from the functional EWLP approach, justifying the title of the book presenting the proceedings of the symposium: *A Turning Point for Literacy* (Ed: Bataille, 1976).

The Declaration of Persepolis conceives literacy as:

> "...not just the process of learning skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it... Literacy... is a fundamental human right.
>
> Literacy work, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation but is an essential instrument for all social change. Literacy is a political act.
>
> Literacy is... inseparable from participation, which is at once its purpose and its condition.
>
> Literacy... would constitute the first stage of basic education... It would permit the development of non-formal education for the benefit of all those who are excluded by the present system... Finally, it will imply a radical reform of the structures of the education system as a whole." (Bataille, 1976, pp. 273–275).

These declarations are very similar to the literacy "conscientization" ideology, expressed in Paulo Freire's publications (Freire, 1972a, 1972b). Freire himself participated in the Persepolis symposium. The rise of the new approach should probably be seen in relation to the poor quantitative results of EWLP and the broad influence Freire had on adult educators during the decade 1965–1974.

In Unesco's own critical evaluation of EWLP, the narrowly technical/economic aims of the "Functional" projects were reviewed in July 1975, when the Recommendations of the Expert Team on Evaluation of Experimental Literacy Projects declared:

> "... the concepts of functionality must be ex-tended to include all its dimensions: political, economic, social and cultural. Just as development is not only economic growth, so literacy... must aim above all to arouse in the individual a critical awareness of social reality, and to enable him or her to understand, master and transform his or her destiny." (Unesco/UNDP, 1976, p. 191).

Ever since these conclusions were drawn, it has been gene-rally agreed in international literacy debate that literacy should be functional in a broad sense and that literacy is only a first step to achieving the objectives set out.

1981–. While "new" definitions of literacy have not been forthcoming, recent debates have revealed a variety of different approaches to literacy. The real establishment of literacy as a human right in international consciousness has served to promote three different tendencies:

a) The popular education movement, which draws on sources like Freire and the Catholic Liberation Theologists. In this view, education in its broad sense is regarded neither as a "social service" nor as an "investment in human capital", but an act of cultural affirmation and liberation, thus a collective community-based act by the exploited classes and groups of society closely integrated into the organization of resistance and change. Part of this act is for the community to make itself literate in a collective consciousness-raising fashion, with community organization an essential goal.

b) The idea that literacy must be promoted on a mass basis, as an integral part of general political and economic (evolutionary) change. This has led to the (somewhat idealistic) promotion of mass campaigns as a general recipe for dealing with illiteracy (and injustice), under the slogan of "eradication of world illiteracy by the year 2000". The Udaipur Seminar's Literacy Declaration encapsulated this idea as follows:

> "A literacy campaign must be seen as a necessary part of a national strategy for overcoming poverty and injustice."(quoted in Bhola 1983, p.245).

The choosing of 1990 as a UN International Literacy Year arose as a consequence of the setting of the end of the century as the target for the eradication of illiteracy.

c) The "Education for All" approach, which has been voiced in various international organs in somewhat changed forms over time. Initially, the idea arose form a concern that education, and in particular primary education, was not "relevant" enough, and it thus took the form of a proposal that "basic" education should be provided for everyone. It was the insistence on education for everybody which distinguished the idea from the previous tenets of "Fundamental Education".

> "Basic education should be provided for all children and adults as soon as the available resources and conditions permit." (World Bank 1980, p.86).

The recognition that education is the right of all, and that universal literacy involves concentration on both child and adult education, is

laudable. However, the concept of basic education was rather vague, grounded in a blend of both context-relevant and more general subjects. The Unesco definition (Unesco 1979) was:

> "...teaching whose objective is the acquisition of knowledge and skills (for example, literacy, arithmetic) necessary for living in a society." (p.118, own translation from French).

The definition left a lot of leeway for anyone to decide what basic education would be **for**. One criticism we could advance was that basic education could easily become another way of giving rural people an inferior education designed to make them prisoners of the soil and to shore up the status quo. However, the concept also coincided with the moves in the industrialized world to going "Back to Basics", that is, for education to be even more centred around literacy and numeracy and "core" academic subjects, with intensified testing and examining.

At the same time, the 1980's were proving to be calamitous for Third World economies, and consequently for education. State budgets declined, teachers were pushed out or sought other employment, school conditions and supply of materials worsened; and in many cases, families ceased to be able to afford the direct and indirect costs of having children in school, let alone the adults spending time on literacy. The process of "structural adjustment", conceived to reduce nations' rapidly rising debt and put economies in tune with the "real" conditions of the world market, had further negative impact on employment, the social sectors, and education. In response, international agencies (led by UNDP, Unesco, UNICEF and the World Bank) set in motion a new drive for "education for all", to be marked by a world conference at the beginning of International Literacy Year. The type of education presently being considered "for all" is oriented by the "Back to Basics" approach, and it is considered important that through both formal and non-formal channels, "efficient" education of internationally-equivalent quality be provided, and certificated by harder reliance on examinations (WCEFA, 1989).

The concept of basic education as context-relevant "applied" education (formal and non-formal) is grounded on the idea of building increased self-reliance through the development of the "non-formal" economy at local level. As internationally-equivalent education (with stress on formal primary schooling), it is grounded on the idea of building the national economy by increased adoption of

technology and production of export goods. Both see literacy as an essential part of education. Both have their theoretical strengths, but both are liable to considerable misuse.

Our unhappy feeling is that, however the notion of "basic education" is interpreted in the near future, what is lacking under the current economic crises are the resources, the political commitment, and the motivation necessary to create and satisfy the demand for education, in particular for adult literacy. And while the vicious debt circle persists, adult literacy efforts are likely to be significantly eroded throughout the Third World.

5. Why Literacy?

In the previous chapter many arguments for adult literacy have been included in the objectives and concepts presented. They do not, however, present arguments against literacy, nor do they include answers to the question of setting priorities between literacy and other efforts in education or in other development areas. These questions deal with literacy's role in development as a whole and the impact of literacy.

It is impossible to separate these questions from the account of the problems of implementation of literacy. We will therefore return to these questions in forthcoming chapters.

5.1 Historical Perspective

Historically, literacy shows itself to be linked to state formation, trade and cultural exchange, urbanization and economic expansion. Arnove and Graff (1987) argue that prime factors in large-scale increases in literacy "... have been more closely related to the efforts of centralizing authorities to establish a moral or political consensus, and, over the past two hundred years, to nation-state building." (p.2).

During thousands of years the art of reading and writing remained a monopoly preserved for a specialized class of scribes or a small elite. When the industrial revolution started around 1750, almost 5000 years had passed since the art of writing was first initiated. Still 90 % of the world's population was deprived of this art.

The invention of printing at the end of the 14th century made it technically possible to spread literacy to larger segments of the population.

The printed word came about in the process of interaction between social and technical change. The Reformation and the birth of capitalism represented social struggles, where the written word was used to intimidate those in power, as well as the other way around.

> "The rising bourgeoisie used the written word to help them effect their revolution and gain power... But once in power the bourgeoisie changes its attitude to writing - it becomes a method of control rather than rebellion." (M. Hoyles, 1977, pp. 25–26).

There are many historical examples illustrating literacy as a two-edged sword. Cortez destroyed the written treasures of the Aztecs, the Nazis burnt books.

Both economic and ideological-religious factors have influenced the growth and at some times the stagnation of literacy.

In Venice, a high rate of literacy was attained in the 15th and 16th centuries, because it was needed for navigation and soldiers needed to be literate to read gun manuals.

A successful national reading campaign for all was carried out in Sweden under the control of the Protestant Church during the 17th and 18th centuries, in order to root the Catechism deeply in people's moral attitudes and behaviour.

Industrialization/urbanization and widespread literacy are clearly inter-related. It is however not a simple correlation, that industrialization comes first and then the universalization of literacy, or vice versa; examples exist of both.

In the mid-19th century more than 50 % of the adult population in most parts of Western Europe was literate. However, the countries showing the highest rates of literacy did not coincide with those most advanced in industrialization at the time. Protestant countries, such as the Scandinavian countries, Scotland, Germany, Holland and Prussia were more advanced in literacy than England and France, although they were less developed. In the rural and Catholic southern parts of Europe, illiteracy was still well above 50 %.

The relationship between industrialization and literacy seems to be dialectical, in that industrialization both requires more advanced and more widespread knowledge and skills, while a certain level of education among broader sectors of the population facilitates industrialization, which in its turn creates conditions for and a need for more widespread schooling.

The European experience also shows that conditions for literacy in rural areas vary. Cipolla (1979) states:

> "In general one can say that where small private plots dominate, the rate of literacy is higher than in areas where the landowners are few and the agricultural workers many."

The industrialized capitalist societies, such as Western Europe and the USA, had become nearly fully literate societies (i.e. over 90% of the adult population with both reading and writing skills) by the beginning of the 20th century, through the introduction of universal schooling for children in the mid-19th century. According to tables presented in Cipolla (1970, p.90, 92), it took England 32 years (1853-1886) and France 28 years (1860-1888) to reduce their illiteracy rates from 30 % to 10 %. France took 53 years (1835-1888) to reduce its illiteracy rate from 50 % to 10 %.

In summary, the main factors behind this breakthrough of universal schooling seem to be:

- Changed relations of production, whereby the societal conditions led to increasing requirements for widespread literacy and elementary skills.
- Changed power relations and class contradictions, which led the bourgeoisie in power to demand a more efficient social and ideological control of the masses. (One strong argument used for introducing universal schooling was that it would reduce criminality).
- Demands for democracy and equal rights, such as to education, by the emerging working class and liberal reformers.
- Economic development, which created the material and structural conditions for the expansion of schooling.

The mass literacy campaign of the USSR between 1919 and 1939, is the first attempt in history by a state to wipe out illiteracy among its adult population within a relatively short period of time. In 20 years illiteracy was reduced from 70 to 13%. Before the Revolution, under the Czarist monarchy, literacy was improving at the snail-pace of a half per cent per year. This would have meant anywhere between 150 to 300 years for illiteracy to be eliminated (Bhola, 1982). The driving force behind the literacy campaign was the Revolution, its ideology and its purpose of changing a traditional socio-economic system into a modern socialist industrial one.

Historically, then, there are two principal models for the attainment of universal literacy within a nation. One is the introduction of really universal primary education (UPE), which will gradually eradicate illiteracy in a nation. (It should be noted that "really UPE" implies not only everyone going to school, but everyone becoming literate thereby). In the North, the introduction of UPE had to be fought for, and winning it in real terms involved the state assuming the project as its own and having the power and resources to turn UPE from a right into a legally-enforced duty.

The second is the "accelerated" model, which combines the introduction of UPE with large-scale literacy activities directed at adults. The latter is not generally sufficient to maintain universal literacy in the absence of the former (there is the partial exception of the Swedish reading campaign in the 17th Century). It is at least arguable, moreover, that the accelerated model requires more state power and more economic sacrifices than the "gradualist" UPE strategy.

How do these models apply to the South today? In some cases, such as parts of Latin America and East Asia, (e.g. Uruguay, Argentina, South Korea, Taiwan), nearly universal literacy has come about through the more gradualist UPE model, without mass campaigns and popular armed revolutions (indeed, with some extremely despotic dictatorships along the way). In other cases, the conquest of power by a popular movement has seen the application of the accelerated model with some success (Cuba, Vietnam, Tanzania, to name a few), even in the absence of large strides in industrialization and economic development.

In general, however, a brief glance at the statistics in Chapter 2 rapidly shows that universal literacy is not coming about "by itself", and that the struggle is far from being won. One maybe complacent about the Newly Industrialized Countries, and excited about revolutionary countries (though really universal literacy is probably a rather tenuous achievement even in these), but between the two lie the countries with the most illiterates. The dependent nature of political and economic (under)development in most of the South has carried in its wake a process of structural marginalization of the economy, particularly of the peasantry and the unemployed. This is accompanied by weak organization and direct suppression of political movements, restricted industrialization (often in capital-intensive forms), and regimes with a low level of legitimacy and/or power. The state is unable to accomplish the mass mobilization needed for the "accelerated" universal literacy project, and indeed, often would prefer not to face the potential threat posed by mass mobilization. The underdeveloping economies get further and further away from being able to pay for UPE itself, which is crucial to both historical models. The peasantry, finding its exploitation on the increase and its attempts at organization suppressed, turns to well-tested (but uncoordinated) passive resistance, which often includes rejecting the education on offer. It is hard to project the smooth attainment of universal literacy in the Third World under such conditions.

Certainly, states with some legitimacy can, within the limits of their dependency, promote an evolutionary improvement in the living situation of the exploited classes, and also make significant inroads on illiteracy. But overall, we believe that the attainment of global literacy is reliant on popular governments coming to power in the Third World, and on thorough restructuring of the international situation of political and economic dependency.

5.2 Pro and Contra Adult Literacy Efforts

Reviewing the literature, five arguments can be detected **against** considerable efforts to spread literacy among adults in Third World countries:

1) The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) will eventually do away with illiteracy, such as has been done in most European countries.

2) Television and radio can provide adults with functional education, so as to improve their lives and to promote economic development without literacy (Verner, 1974).

3) "In time, after more urgent needs have been met, literacy may then itself become a need. Underprivileged adults have a greater need to learn marketable skills than to become literate." (Verner, 1974, p. 310).

   Unesco expressed a similar view in 1946:

   "... it is more important to teach people better agriculture and village hygiene than to take time teaching them to read. When they are better fed and in better health, then literacy campaigns can be started." (Fundamental Education, 1947, p. 188).

4) Making the underprivileged literate might create high expectations and demands which would lead to upheaval against the established order. This argument is nowadays seldom declared openly, but it could be a reason for insignificant investments in literacy, as a general "status quo" policy.

5) Literacy often has negative effects:

   "Are we fully aware and concerned about the... often destructive potential of our literacy endeavours and the indirect, negative influences and repercussions on developmental processes which are apparent in phenomena like rural exodus, negligence of traditional skills and cultural heritages bound to non-written transfer...?" (Hinzen, Horn, Leumer, Nieman, 1983).

Freire (1972) criticizes literacy led by the "oppressive society" as being "dehumanizing", "oppressive" and "domesticating", reinforcing existing injustice and the dominant culture. Unless literacy is organized for liberation and transformation of the oppressive system through a "conscientizing" process, it is not desirable.

The first three of these arguments are interlinked and often used simultanously. None of them are, however, used today by international agencies like Unesco.

It is strongly advocated by these agencies and other experts that UPE must be introduced in parallel to adult literacy, or else new illiterate generations will continue to grow up. UPE without non-formal literacy programmes would not eradicate illiteracy in any predictable time, considering the present rates of school attendance and the inefficiency of primary schooling, producing high drop-out rates and people relapsing into illiteracy. Primary schooling will not improve its quality, as long as school children live in illiterate environments with illiterate parents. The fact that parents' educational background influences children's school achievement is an important argument for adult literacy, used by many authors (Myrdal 1968, Rafe-uz-Zaman 1978, Unesco 1980).

The use of radio and television instead of literacy has also been widely repudiated, although the idea is being revived in some circles. In many rural areas, these media do not exist, or do not function properly. In any case, the one-way communication provided by these media - if available - is not enough to teach illiterate adults useful skills. To the extent that non-print media are available to the majority, they can on the other hand supplement the print media in carrying development messages or elements of teaching. In this case they can also play an important role in the process of mobilizing people for literacy (Myrdal 1968; Rafe-uz-Zaman 1978; Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979; Bhola 1983).

The third argument is perhaps the most complex, because it says YES but NOT NOW, considering that other basic needs are greater and literacy is a marginal need. It is generally shown that motivation for literacy is very low, especially in deprived rural areas. One of the fundamental problems to be considered in planning literacy programmes, is exactly how to create motivation. If the lack of motivation had always been accepted as an argument against launching literacy programmes, then we would certainly have had less progress in literacy today than we have. Myrdal (1968) argues against those who deprecate the importance of literacy:

"... Literacy opens up avenues of communication that otherwise remain closed, it is a prerequisite for acquisition of other skills and the development of more rational attitudes." (p. 1668).

In response to the lack of a felt need of literacy among the masses, Myrdal (1968) advocates that literacy programmes should have the character of a "movement" and a "campaign", in order to create this motivation "by propaganda and by local example." (p. 1662).

Most literacy literature argues similarly in favour of literacy as a priority task, and not as a task that can wait until other signs of development appear. The main argument - apart from social justice and fundamental human rights - is connected to the question of literacy's role in development.

In spite of the efforts made within the EWLP to evaluate the social and economic effects of literacy, the causal link between literacy and development remains ambiguous or unproved. There are, however, numerous examples of coincidence between advances in literacy and advances in economic and social development. World Bank studies purport to show that the highest rates of return are obtained from investment in primary-level education, and that agricultural productivity increases when a farmer has completed four years of schooling. Other studies have clearly shown the positive effect of basic education on health, nutrition, mother and child care, and family planning (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985).

In general, we adhere to a dialectic view of the relationship between literacy and socio-economic development, in accordance with, for example, Myrdal (1968):

"... their influence on each other must be mutual and cumulative". (p. 1667),

or with the conclusions from the International Seminar on Campaigning for Literacy in Udaipur, India, January 1982:

"The Udaipur Seminar expressed the view that while the role of literacy in development was indeed significant, there was nothing automatic or deterministic about the literacy and development connection." (Bhola, 1983, p. 204).

"Literacy and the political economy of a society are in a dialectical relationship, each affected by and affecting the other... Literacy work is never too early since it is 'potential added' to individual new literates, to their families and to their communities." (Bhola, 1983, p. 205).

There are certainly examples of industrial and/or economic development preceding mass literacy, such as was the case in many European countries. Even if mass literacy may not always be a

necessary condition for economic development, it can facilitate the introduction of innovations of all kinds that are part of the development process (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

It is in this context necessary to stress the importance of adult literacy as compared to children's education, because of the relatively short time it takes to teach adults, and particularly because of the active role adults already have in society. Tanzania's President Nyerere illustrated this, when in 1964 he said to Parliament:

> "First we must educate adults. Our children will not have an impact on our own development for five, ten or even twenty years." (Johnsson, Nyström, Sunden, 1983, p. 4).

Regarding the potential of adult literacy, the education of women is particularly interesting, because of their central role in the production of basic food crops and their key role in transferring habits, skills, attitudes, etc. to the children.

The widening gender disparities in illiteracy in different regions is today worsened by severe economic constraints and increasing debt burdens. The economic crisis is very likely to result in increased demands on women's work and duties, as well as less priority for literacy. Without strong popular movements promoting women's participation, including in literacy, illiterate poverty-stricken women will continue to be the most exposed victims. However, achieving literacy could be one of the first steps in a process enabling women to take control over their own lives, to particpate on a more equal basis in society, and eventually free themselves from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression. In addition to social justice, human rights, and equality, there are many other human, social, and economic reasons to urge governments and organizations seriously to take special actions to promote women's literacy. The sole fact that mothers' level of education has a positive effect on children's health and progress in school should be a strong enough argument.

The fourth argument against literacy is a political one. Literacy is, as we shall see later on in more detail, a political issue and a political process. It is important to note that literacy therefore plays different roles, depending on the specific political context as well as on the socio-cultural and economic context of a literacy programme. Literacy has specific ideological aims (sometimes religious) often reflected in the contents of a literacy programme. It requires a certain participation in organizing, mobilizing, teaching, learning and discussing; and finally it provides a tool for further acquisition of information that might be political. In countries with governments which do not give priority to literacy or other basic needs, adult literacy is orga-

nized on a limited scale, mostly by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious, humanitarian or political. Governments, especially those which represent a repressive system against those struggling for social justice, are often threatened by literacy activities, not so much because people become literate, but rather by the organized activity that is needed in order to bring about literacy (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979, p.63).

The political arguments in favour of mass literacy are mostly used by governments who promote some kind of mass participation or democracy in society or by opposition movements or organizations, such as national liberation movements, who see literacy as a facilitating tool in the struggle to mobilize people for specific political aims and tasks. In any case, the possible political importance literacy may have, depends obviously on who organizes it, for what purpose, and in what context. This issue will be discussed in more depth below.

The last argument referred to against literacy, considers its possible negative effects. This argument does not imply that literacy should never be promoted, but rather that it should only take place when certain circumstances (existing or created) permit a positive effect.

Bhola (1982) responds to these arguments by saying:

> "Some of the consequences of literacy may be negative and even unavoidable; but when not deliberately abused literacy is positive and potent, literacy can not wait." (p. 27).

We have so far discussed the justifications for literacy in regard to the society at the level of the local community or the nation. The justifications in regard to the individual or the family are not all the same. They are closely linked to the problem of motivation for literacy, to which we will return.

One of the most important arguments for literacy is related to basic human rights and is relevant for all these levels (individual, family, community, etc.), as is expressed by Fägerlind and Saha (1983):

> "Literacy is also a basic human right which expands personal choice, control over one's environment, and allows for collective action not otherwise possible." (pp. 43–44).

Considering the many disadvantages that illiteracy implies for the individual illiterates, one can use the argument formulated by an International Seminar held in Berlin in 1983:

> "If there are close to one billion adult illiterates in the world – as there are – then there are also one billion living reasons for literacy." (Fordham, 1985, p. 23).

As has been remarked, those who argue against literacy are those who are already literate!

5.3 The Value of Literacy

In summary, the question "Why Literacy?" can be answered with a wide range of justifications related to either basic values or assumed effects of literacy in different contexts. Literacy in itself, however, is only a potential tool, that may or may not be used for a great variety of purposes of an economic, social, political, and cultural nature. As a capacity it can be dominated to a greater or lesser extent and, without application, it can easily be lost. The capacity can be used by various agents for a large number of ends. Literacy is a flexible tool, and its learning has at least two key moments. One is precisely the period in which it is being learnt, that is, **how it is delivered**, which is of itself so important that it can come to represent the principle means for attaining the objectives contemplated. The other, more obviously, is its later **utilization**.

As an instrument of communication, it is evident that literacy is not merely an individual capacity, but also an instrument for collective activity. On top of this, literacy being (by design or not) a part of an education system and of a political economy in general, it is clear that its delivery/acquisition (or not) will be influenced by a large number of motivations and aims, which will very often be contradictory, or unite **only** around a common wish to deliver/acquire.

We will thus also enter into a consideration of two fundamental issues in literacy work: the objectives of the **deliverers** of literacy, and the motivation and aims of the potential **acquirers** of the skill.

6. State Objectives for Launching Literacy Programmes

In general, the State (in the form of the ruling party or the government) constitutes the driving force for launching literacy activities. It may wish to respond to demand from the people, or have to yield to pressure from international sources, from the public, or from opposition groups. It may even take over the literacy initiative to defuse or neutralise its potential for supporting or legitimising opposition groups. State provision of literacy may, as was historically the case in Europe, represent a strategy for social control, social discipline, and legitimation of inequality (Graff, 1977). Adult literacy is, however, a chancy strategy for social control, and two positions are to be found as a result, to control via literacy, or to control through leaving people illiterate! Nonetheless, one should not underestimate the legitimacy that literacy activities can provide internationally to a government; and the creation of substantial moral pressure on regimes to "do something about illiteracy" is an interesting example of the way that multilateral and bilateral aid agencies have influenced governments to get involved in activities in which they may not really have very much interest.

When the state actively promotes literacy activities, its motivation is usually based on the expectation that they will serve as an instrument for making other changes in the society, i.e. literacy is conceived within the framework of the state's development strategy. Without doubt, part of the motivation may reside in an egalitarian ideology and a respect for human rights. Nonetheless, even in this case, to run literacy programmes the state always has to devote significant resources to them, which will be limited by the level of economic development and will also automatically represent some other non-realized investment. Thus the state will try to make the most of its investment in terms of overall outcomes, i.e. the transformation of the society or some part of it, politically, socially and/or economically. The state itself is not monolithic, furthermore, so often its literacy programme will in fact include diverse aims responding partially to various different pressures, some seeing the political potential of the programme, others the economic aspects. Thus a

statement of national literacy aims is often a mixture of human rights declarations, political objectives, social aspirations, and economic strategy. However, in most cases the principal objective involved is clearly identifiable, and so we will treat the issue by looking at such principle objectives one by one.

6.1 Socio-political Objectives

First of all, the mere promotion of literacy activities can benefit the state, and give it some legitimacy in the eyes of the people: "the state is doing something for us." The project represents both an immediate consumption good for the under-privileged and an apparent investment in the participants' future, as well as having the advantage of transferring the responsibility for making good use of the opportunity onto the population itself. At the same time, international approval can be acquired, as well as a supply of aid funding. However, risks are involved. Usually the programme needs to be of large enough scale to merit attention, and if it shows no satisfactory results, in the long term the state can be discredited.

As previously noted, the activity can serve the intended objectives both through its process and through its results. Notably, socialist states have explicitly made use of the process to attain political objectives. The content serves to inform the participants about aspects of national policy, while the organizational form, of mass campaigns in a semi-military style, attains various objectives simultaneously. The campaigns mobilize the people on a large scale to participate in an organized collective act of solidarity with the revolution, with important effects not only on the illiterates, but also on the society's "middle classes", who represent a potential obstacle to the socialist project as a whole, but who can fairly easily be mobilized to participate in a "welfare" project like literacy. Then, through their direct contact with the campaign organization and the masses, the "middle-class" teachers themselves receive a political education.

It is evident that such campaigns are difficult to carry through outside a situation where the state represents a promise of large-scale social and economic transformation.

Subordinate to these primary political objectives which are reached principally through mass participation, there exists a series of other objectives. The experience of mobilization can be used for other purposes later on. The collective participation in classes can be made use of to mobilize the participants for other purposes, e.g.

construction of social infrastructure, or participation in cooperatives, etc. (Ethiopia provides an interesting experience of this). The question of reinforcing national identity/unity comes up frequently, through the contents, and sometimes through language, either by using literacy to spread a national language (e.g. Mozambique), or by using literacy as an affirmation of giving value to various national languages and promoting "unity in diversity" (e.g. Ethiopia). Occasionally the message of the campaign is reinforced by using conscientization methods adapted from Freire (e.g. Nicaragua), but in general states do not apply this method in "pure" form, due to its political potential for promoting uncoordinated local actions and even criticism of the state itself.

The objectives are profoundly rooted in large-scale participation, and in creation of social mobilization, so little weight is put on the academic quality of results. Often this implies a fairly low level of literacy skills, and numeracy is often omitted. However, there is hardly any sense in promoting literacy campaigns if no-one becomes literate or no-one can use the skills acquired, so an immediate, if less "hot", follow-up becomes necessary.

Even outside the socialist use of literacy campaigns, it is clear (as admirably shown by Freire) that in all cases literacy is a political act, and both overt and covert political messages are to be found in all literacy programmes.

6.2 Economic Objectives

As argued, political and economic objectives are closely intertwined in the long run, from the state's point of view. Thus it is rare to find a literacy programme which is justified solely from an economic standpoint. However, some kind of economic reasoning lies behind all state literacy projects, and in many, it predominates. This is logical,not only because literacy requires investment, but also because the decision to use **literacy** as a point of departure is rooted in a vision of society (or part of it) becoming different, i.e. "more developed", where literacy and numeracy play a role in the relations of production.

Giving emphasis to literacy's economic potential can give rise to large-scale programmes or to small highly selective projects, contrary to a situation where primarily political objectives automatically lead the state to large-scale activities. In general, the allocation of

predominantly economic functions to literacy represents an evolutionary view of social change, i.e. the programme is redolent of expressions such as "self-help", "raising the standard of living", etc., implying a process of gradual improvement, rather than rapid social restructuring.

On the one hand predominantly economic objectives for literacy can result in a highly work-oriented programme, which tries to build an immediate link between "theoretical" study and productive practice, and which incorporates a large amount of technical information about production. The EWLP (see below) is the most exaggerated example of this approach, then called "Functional literacy" (for convenience, we will refer to this approach as Functional in the future). With the exception of Tanzania, Functional literacy has been confined to fairly small-scale programmes, mostly inclined towards raising the productivity of illiterates within economic projects or "development schemes", in many cases in the form of trying to raise the subsistence level of peasant farmers through providing the bases for greater "selfreliance".

On the other hand, (perhaps largely arising from EWLP lessons), the economic "evolutionary" approach can consider literacy to be one of a large number of inputs to build economic growth, serving as an impulse by, for example, promoting "modern" attitudes in the participants and putting useful instruments in their hands, like some information about production techniques, and some ability to read instructions, calculate with money, work with measurements, write reports, etc. This approach is often built into development projects, the curriculum becomes more general, and the promoters do not expect immediate and direct economic results from it. Often, in fact, this expectation is transferred onto the post-literacy stage, where "learning to read" is supposed to turn into "reading to learn" (to borrow a phrase from Singh, 1976).

6.3 General Demand-meeting Objectives

One also finds a number of quite large-scale programmes which are not directly integrated into a development plan and which have at most an "evolutionary" political perspective. These are often to be found in countries where illiteracy is not regarded by the state as a major problem but where the state decides to respond to public (and even international) pressure to "do something about it". Given this decision, literacy is then seen as something which could be a long-term socio-economic investment which gives "hidden reserves of talent" an opportunity to manifest themselves. Use is not made of

direct and constant social pressure to impel enrollment. Rather, the programme provides access to education for those who want it. In such cases, it may even turn into a long-term indicative plan for the eradication of illiteracy. Apart from low-key mobilizational tactics, such programmes are marked by a general curriculum, by careful attention to the techniques of teaching literacy, and by the creation of a technical infrastructure composed of trained local literacy officers as well as paid teachers (often with relatively high level of schooling). This arises because the main attraction of the programme is its pedagogical quality. The state is usually fairly ambivalent about the programme, and, if it fails to attract much enrollment, is prepared to discontinue it without much remedial effort. In this kind of programme it is also notable that the state is often prepared to give NGO's a fairly large role.

6.4 The Contribution of International Agencies

While the national state appears to play the dominant role in the provision, or not, of literacy to its illiterate citizens it is possible to find many examples of states involving national NGOs in literacy activities, or of national or local level NGOs taking the initiative in literacy work. Furthermore, it is increasingly becoming the case that states and NGOs turn to extra-national organizations for funding, which thereby intervene in the provision of literacy to people while not representing their national state. The importance of this influence is easy to derive from our discussions (above and below) of the role of Unesco, not only in promoting literacy and securing its status as a human right, but also in influencing individual countries and programmes as what kind of literacy should be provided and how it should be delivered. Other UN agencies, such as the UNDP and UNICEF, have also played a role in literacy in a similar way, as have the World Bank and other aid agencies. There can be little doubt that the participation (or intervention) of these organizations represents a further set of objectives which influence who gets what kind of literacy. These diverse organizations represent a wide spectrum of different national (or even private organizational) interests, and the UN agencies represent an even more complex forum of international agreements, so that "who gets what" also varies widely. On one extreme, some organizations decide what to support on the basis of democratic criteria, and provide aid with few strings attached; on the other , "interventionism" is much more pronounced. In Arnove (1980), a previous director of a project run by a large foundation is quoted as saying:

> "...the government's and the foundations assistance programmes have been striving to thwart communism, sell America's producers'goods, raise foreign living standards, or all three at once." (p.215)

In considering what happens in national literacy programmes, the more or less evident international purposes in supporting and even influencing them should not be overlooked. It is certain that some measure of self-interest will intervene. In a situation of extremely unequal global distribution of power, capital and resources, the "aid marketplace" cannot but function as yet another site of unequal relations, where the donor is able to influence the recipient.

In the next chapter, we will look briefly at another set of interests which may intervene in literacy provision, that of NGOs at the national level.

References for this chapter

Background thoughts on the role of the state in literacy are to be found in Freire (1972a), Wangoola (1983), Kweka (1983), Street (1985), Carron and Bordia (1985), Arnove and Graff (1987). The issue of the role of education in a state and of the state's role in education has recently been gaining prominence: Giroux (1981), Dale et al.(eds), vols. 1 and 2 (1981), Carnoy and Levin (1985) are some examples. Arnove (ed., 1980), represents an interesting look at the objectives of aid-givers in general.

7. The Role of National NGOs

In the organization and teaching of adult literacy, NGOs have often had a salient role to play. Where the state actively promotes literacy work, it often can also involve NGOs and mass organizations in the activities. Where it has a more passive stance, it may permit NGOs to take on the task on their initiative, or cede part of the national programme to them. In other cases NGOs, especially community organizations, have managed to carry out activities that the state is against but is not able to stop.

The range of organizations falling under the title "NGO" is so very broad and diverse that the term is of little use except for (partially) defining what an organization is not. Initially, in the field of adult education we may discriminate between those of purely national origin and those which are internationally linked or stimulated. In the former category fall everything from community-based organizations and clubs to large independent non-profit-making organizations with national coverage; while in the latter are to be found, for example, organizations of the established religions, or branch organizations of international education associations. Thus the role of NGOs in adult literacy might best be approached from some examples.

In Latin America, there has been a phenomenal spread since the late 1960's of "popular education", which grew up as a popular expression of the need of the exploited classes and groups in society to organize and educate themselves to resist oppression, recover and re-create their own culture, and work cooperatively for social change. The roots of the movement are probably to be found in a combination of resistance to exploitation, the Paulo Freirian use of literacy learning for liberation, the theories of Antonio Gramsci on the formation and role of intellectuals organic to the working class, the activities of liberation theologists within the Catholic church, and the organizing activities of banned political movements. Starting out on the basis of community organizations which combine organizational with educational work, the trend has been to grow to-

wards the creation of a broad popular front of community-rooted organizations which struggle collectively against the general structures of oppression while maintaining particular community-interest issues high on each organization's agenda. Within "popular education", literacy work may form part of the acitivities. In Latin America, partly due to the continental "umbrella" of the Catholic church, which offers wide contacts and some shelter, and partly because one common problem is seen to be US influence in the continent, these organizations have managed to create regional networks and organizations that cover a number of countries. The scope of operation of each organization varies widely, under conditions which vary from revolutionary states, through elected governments to dictatorial military regimes; but even in the last case, it is clear that the organizations have managed to find the cracks and spaces in the control of the state and move ahead, even under very dangerous circumstances. A very similar movement, with some church support, has been growing steadily in South Africa over the past twenty years.

In India and in other parts of South Asia, NGO involvement in non-formal and literacy eduation for adults and children has burgeoned. On the one hand, community organizations similar to popular education movements have sprung up in response to social repression in the structures of the local society, e.g. caste and "feudal" class repression, and exploitation of women. However, from our reading they seem not to have achieved the same "network" organization across the countries, though they may closely related to local political parties/groups. On the other hand, there seem to be a very large number of education-oriented NGOs which work closely with the states themselves, meaning a collaborative sharing of tasks between states' (adult) education departments and these NGOs. There thus arises a combination of state and external financing, specialized NGOs to develop curricula and train teachers, and community organizations to mobilize and incorporate the learners. In some instances (as happens also in Latin America), university departments take on the role of providing expertise. An example of this collaborative organization is to be found in the "Bay of Bengal Project" (BOBP), which was initiated among the fisherfolk of five countries bordering the Bay, with the original objective of improving fishing techniques and raising living standards. Financed by Sweden and executed by the FAO, the project has spread to involve several state adult education departments, literacy-oriented NGOs, and local community organizations concerned with women's issues, non-formal basic education for out-of-school youth, etc. (see National Swedish Board of Fisheries, 1984). Some of the Indian NGOs in-

volve very large numbers of people in literacy, though still small in relation to the background of India having 30% of all illiterates in the world.

In Africa, fewer "constituted" local community organizations seem to operate, although rural communities are tightly organized and interwoven by family and clan ties. In some of the more economically developed nations, trade unions perform a special function in the education of members. Political parties often have a women's organization and a youth organization which have a role to play in literacy work. Sometimes service organizations are found, such as the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe, which provide the technical inputs of programme development and teacher training against payment (see Lind et al, 1986). The independent and the established (i.e. "multi-national") churches have thus played a leading non-governmental role in literacy provision. The former have been more dynamic in the past, as they often represented local foci of active or passive resistance to colonialism, whereas the latter either collaborated with the colonial authority or occupied a highly ambivalent position between Europe, the colonial power, the settlers, and the African congregation. However, many of the established churches have become more "indigenous" and have moved away from "domesticating" or religion-oriented literacy into more "conscientization"- oriented work.

The probable explanation for the relative successes of NGOs in literacy/post-literacy and in popular education in general, lies in the rooting of the NGO in some form of cohesive community (members, class, gender, church-goers, etc), representing an organization to a greater or lesser extent responsive to the needs, demands and interests of that community, as well as a large degree of non-identification (or even opposition) to the state. In this sense, it is the feeling of a common cause which mobilizes and involves the community in its own project. Literacy ceases to be a "service" and becomes an act of solidarity and cultural affirmation, even resistance. The community-based nature of the NGO and thus of the activity constitute its strength, but largely define its limits in terms of actually "getting to grips" with the task of literacy as a whole. It is probably only under conditions of a fairly powerless state, or a popular state, that NGOs can combine their educational efforts into a mass movement against illiteracy in society. Otherwise, either the repressive forces of the state will intervene, or the educational programme in the long term will become compromised by its relative lack of effect on rigid socio-economic reality and/or by the collaboration of the NGO and the state.

There has been some effort on the part of international organizations to support the literacy efforts of NGOs. This may arise from the fact that the NGO is able or willing to do better what the state is not. Under some situations, it may represent an attempt to keep an eye on what is being done. In other circumstances it may even represent a direct "vote of displeasure" against the behaviour of disliked regimes. In many cases, support to NGOs is a laudable effort. However, we see as potentially problematic, the relationship between aid agencies, with their own procedures and interests, and the fact that the NGO's strength lies in its community roots and its responsiveness to community decision-making.

8. Individual Motivation for Literacy

8.1 General Findings on Motivational Factors

The key to adult literacy success is still more than in other forms of education, motivation, because of the nature of the living conditions of adult illiterate people. The essence of our study on factors influencing literacy campaign success, is therefore a question of under what circumstances motivation for literacy is strong enough, or can motivation be created and sustained among the masses of illiterates, so that a literacy campaign may reduce illiteracy substantially in a given area. All factors involved – national policy and ideology, infra- structure of literacy services, teachers, curricula, post-literacy, etc. – are geared towards ensuring, reinforcing or maintaining motivation, without which the whole enterprise would collapse. We will here examine the motivational pattern of the learners or potential learners.

The general experience and tendency of motivation for literacy, as manifested by illiterate adults offered literacy, is contradictory, in that without various forms of mobilization, awakening or creating motivation, the response is weak, but once initial mobilization has been carried out in an appropriate way, literacy often attracts a fair number of enrollees. However, in almost all cases the majority of the literacy learners drop out during the course (except in a few campaigns where the drop-out rate has been less than 50 %). Among those who do not enrol many might nevertheless have a desire to become literate, while others might not ever have felt the need or desire to acquire literacy.

> "Experience shows that it is more or less futile to try to promote literacy... until keen interest in learning to read and write has been awakened." (Gray, 1969, p. 28).

Laubach's experience is that motivation often does exist, although the first response may be negative:

"The first problem we often confront is how to persuade an illiterate to learn. If you... ask him to study he is likely to say 'no'. Of one thing we may be sure - he **does** want to read." (Laubach, 1947, p. 111).

Laubach (1947, pp. 111–113) mentions three reasons for this resistance on the part of illiterates to study:

1) suspicion of a patronizing attitude and an ulterior motive on the part of literacy organizers or teachers: "Illiterates have been swindled and exploited and deceived by educated people so constantly that they are afraid of us...";

2) doubt of own ability: "the groundless belief that only children can learn and that an adult is too old to learn";

3) fear of a tedious teaching-learning process: "in many countries education and pain have been synonymous - the more pain, the more education".

The first and third reasons above are not declared openly by the potential learners:

"The illiterate usually does give another reason for his resistance, he is too polite to say, "I don't like you" or "I suspect you" so he says instead "I am too busy" or "I am too old to learn" or "I don't need to learn". But all of these are only excuses." (p. 113).

If there is no mobilization for literacy classes or no literacy offered, usually no expressed demand for it is manifested:

"Because of the nature of the clientele the touch-stone of most literacy analysis is motivation... The issue is not just the individual motivation, but the motivation of the government or agency concerned. Indeed the two are intimately connected, since it is the apparent lack of individual motivation that impels literacy experts to concentrate on motivation or commitment at the national level. Outside of the context of an ongoing national campaign, it is undeniable that literacy is the one level of education in the Third World where people are **not** clamouring for greater access or more provision." (King (ed.), 1978, p. ii).

There are many studies and experiences showing that:

"... virtually every literacy project in every country still starts out with overenthusiastic over-subscriptions of enrollment. People would indeed like to be literate. However, the strength of their desire and its ability to carry them through to completion are still the uncertain factors." (Oxenham, 1975, p. 4).

An in-depth study on motivation in Bangladesh concluded:

"... all adult participants as well as teachers, had a positive attitude towards the adult literacy programme, at least in the initial phase. They

> realize the importance of such programmes, but in spite of this both enrollment and attendance are far from satisfactory. The strongest barrier to motivation is poverty, since the potential learners need to use all their time earning a living, they cannot spare sufficient time to attend school. The programme moreover does not provide any immediate benefit, nor any clear prospect for the future, and this is another major barrier." (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979, p. 82).

When there is a strongly felt need for literacy, the methods of delivering literacy seem to be of less importance: "Where the motivations are present, even inefficient methodologies may succeed impressively." (Fordham (ed.), 1985, p. 17).

This implies that although the need to explain the relevance of literacy in pre-literacy mobilization campaigns is essential, it is still more important to create a situation where the need for literacy is felt or where the use of literacy becomes evident, or to select areas for literacy where such a situation already exists in order to ensure strong motivation.

The consensus is that to insert literacy into an ongoing development project/programme aiming at solving felt needs, encourages participation and motivation; though, as we later take up, the form of this insertion can become problematic for literacy success.

The individual motivation that might exist without promises and arguments put forward by campaigners or mobilizers, arises from earlier life experience and perspectives of the future. For example, studies from Pakistan have concluded that:

> "...learners must have had some exposure to written language, seen the need for reading or heard of other illiterates who have achieved success through literacy before they apply themselves to the lengthy task of becoming literate" (ICAE, 1979, p. 35).

A similar finding is that previous involvement in education, no matter how limited the experience, favours participation in literacy.

The availability of easy and useful reading material, such as posters, newspapers, books, etc. influences motivation for literacy in the same way. The introduction of written material of this kind - often referred to as "the creation of a literate environment" - may therefore be made prior to a literacy effort in order to create the need for literacy. Geographical mobility from rural to urban areas also creates literacy needs, i.e. for correspondence. This is one of the most common concrete motives for illiterates wanting to become literate. A common felt need is also to sign their own name, instead of the humiliating fingerprint that illiterates have to give in their various

forms of contact with authorities. Other common individual motives that may inspire the need for literacy are to:

- help own children attending school
- get employment or a better job with higher salary and prestige
- gain social prestige
- avoid being cheated by knowing how to check calculations or read contracts
- strengthen self-confidence
- make it possible to get further education.

Mainly under conditions of socio-political transformation, motivation may be more oriented towards social, political and collective aims (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979), such as:

- to acquire more knowledge about social rights and duties
- to be able to participate in and influence social and political life
- to keep accounts and minutes within social or political organizations
- to teach others
- to improve own and others' living conditions.

The most common reasons for joining adult literacy programmes found in a survey in Bangladesh were to "learn reading books, letters" and also to "write letters". Among other reasons were "to gain social prestige", "to help teach their own children" (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979). An evaluation made in Botswana found "general literacy", "community development" and "reading and writing letters" to be the most common expectations from joining the Literacy Programme (Botswana, Ministry of Education, 1984).

We have seen that motivation may exist or may be created to achieve a positive attitude towards a literacy endeavour and a relatively high enrolment in the initial phase. Why then does the attendance rate become so low and drop-out rates so high?

It seems as if the same reasons which kept back those illiterates who did not even enrol also have a strong influence on attendance and drop-out. The conditions of poverty in rural areas imply that work for survival, including the traditional tasks of women, must always be given priority in use of time. Lack of time is the most common reason given for dropout, both in Botswana and Bangladesh, by interviewed drop-outs. This reason seems to reflect the participants' living conditions or the "poverty" barrier to motivation mentioned above. Very few interviewees in the Botswana study stated "no interest" as a reason for not joining or dropping out. Fears and apprehensions such as the quite common belief among adults that they are too old to

learn have also been found to hinder both motivation to enrol and to continue (Laubach 1947; ICAE 1979). Such psychological barriers are frequently not given attention in literacy literature.

The high drop-out rate, one may suppose, also reflects some kind of disillusion: "When it becomes clear that no immediate material gains are associated with literacy, the disillusioned participants start to drop out of the programme." (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979).

As was pointed out by Laubach (referred to above) the reasons given by illiterates for not joining or, we can suspect, for dropping out, may be excuses, or there may be reasons not openly declared, such as "discouraging teaching methods". Several reports support this theory in the sense that the teachers' attitudes are held to be essential for participation and for sustaining motivation, although this observation is **not** based on interview surveys with adult learners. A superior and patronizing attitude discourages motivation, while a democratic, open and involved attitude, treating the learners as equal adults and creating an atmosphere of confidence, is found to have a positive influence on attendance and results (Laubach 1947; Freire 1972; Sjöström & Sjöström 1982).

In some countries or regions, especially in Africa, the extended family structure has not been severely damaged by the nature of the "development" process, and the family, rather than the individual, is still the basic social and economic unit. Under these conditions, we find other forms of constraint operating on enrolment in schools and literacy classes. As a unit, the family may well decide that only one or two of its members need under prevailing circumstances (notably, family production needs) to become literate, or to graduate from high school and become employed, thereby adequately serving the needs for literacy/cash/influence of the whole family. This may also explain why many people enrol in literacy classes or schools for a short period before dropping out. In that short period, they have attained their own limited goals, such as ability to sign their names, or do simple sums, while more advanced operations will fall to the lot of other family members.

In such "underdeveloped" regions, these situations largely undercut the "developed" western rationale of social analysis and programming on the basis of individual statistical collection. It would be much more indicative to measure access to and attainment of literacy skills and education per family, and in the first place move to redress the problems of inequalities and hardship at the family level.

(For provoking these ideas we thank Gustaf Callewaert, researching in Guinea-Bissau).

A poem "Why should we become literate?" by the Director of the National Institute of Adult Education in India makes an interpretation of the motivations and disillusions experienced by literacy learners, similar to those mentioned above. Here are some excerpts:

...
We joined the literacy classes before.
But after some time, we got wise.
We felt cheated. So we left the classes.

...
We agree to join the classes
if you teach us how not to depend
on others any more.

We should be able to read simple books,
keep our own accounts, write letters
and read and understand newspapers.

One more thing –
why do our teachers feel so superior?
They behave as if we were ignorant fools,
as if we were little children.

...
Treat us like adults.
Behave with us as friends.

And yet, something more –
we don't get a square meal.
We have few clothes.
We don't have a proper shelter.
And, to top it all, floods come and wash away
everything, then comes a long spell of drought,
drying up everything.
Would it help us if we became literate?

Can literacy help us live
a little better? – starve a little less?

...
Would we get better seeds, fertilizer and all the water
we need? Would we get proper wages?

...
If all this is done, all of us
will join the literacy classes, it will then be
learning to live a better life.

...
But if we find out that we are
being duped again
with empty promises,
we will stay away from you.

(Satyen Moitra in *Adult Education and Development* Sept. 1982).

The experience behind this poem also illustrates the danger of false promises given in mobilization and propaganda for joining literacy.

As we have noted earlier it is, however, only some campaigns and some small-scale projects that have overcome the problem of massive drop-out. Apart from other important factors characteristic of successful campaigns, incentives and social or moral pressure or even sanctions have often been used to urge illiterates to learn. For example, during the literacy campaign in the USSR those who were illiterate and government-employed were confronted with the alternative of learning to read or losing their jobs. A strong pressure on people to learn to read in Sweden during the 17th and 18th centuries' reading campaign was created by not permitting marriage without reading skills (Johansson, 1977).

The two most powerful methods to inspire or even compel literacy motivation, attendance and learning are according to Laubach (1947) "making it easy and making it necessary".

8.2 Women's Motivation for Literacy

Surveys carried out on participation in literacy programmes reveal somewhat contradictory tendencies. In certain countries, many more women than men participate (Kenya 80 %, Zimbabwe nearly 90 %, Zambia 70 %). Although it is true that the illiteracy rate is higher among women than men, this does not explain why so many women and so few men participate. On the other hand, most experiences show that the drop-out rate among women is high and their attendance is very irregular. As a consequence of this and of other factors disadvantageous to women, several evaluations of literacy show that it takes longer for women to become literate, in other words the pass rate is lower for women than for men. This is the case of, for example, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mozambique (Johnston 1984).

What then are the motivations of women to explain their relatively high participation in certain African countries? Research undertaken by Jennifer Riria (1983) on rural women and literacy in Kenya and other countries shows that women's motivation for literacy is partly linked to changes in the social role of men and women. Women in many third world countries, especially Africa, are now actively involved in areas that men monopolized before. With the emigration of men to the towns to take up employment, women have been left in charge of agriculture and general home improvement projects. Consequently women in this situation feel the need for literacy because they see it as an instrument to coping in an understanding way with their responsibilities. It also creates a desire among women to be able to read their husband's letters and to write back without help of other people. Other motivations common among women learners relate to:

a) the desire to help children to study. This is one of the most commonly-declared motives for literacy expressed by women learners. Moreover, when women are forced to refrain from participating in literacy, they often translate their motivation into a wish to have their children in school.

b) more self-reliance and control over personal life. Recently women on the south coast of Kenya explained the advantages of having learnt to read, write, and calculate by referring to their new abilities to sign their names, to travel, control money transactions, read medical prescriptions and instructions, and their resulting feeling of pride and self-reliance. "Our eyes have been opened" was one typical comment (Learners' panel at 4th Meeting of the International Task Force on Literacy, April 1989).

c) liberation from isolation and absolute submission to received authority.

d) the wish to be actors in society in the same way as men. There are several interesting experiences, particularly in the context of social transformation and political mobilization for literacy and equality between women and men, showing the importance for women of coming together through literacy participation to discuss common problems. For example, in 1971, when the first drive of the Tanzanian literacy campaign reached the island of Mafia, female learners, asked if they thought that the literacy classes meant liberation for them, replied:

> "Oh yes. Before we could hardly go out. As a young girl I was restricted to my home during several years. Once married I had to wear my veil when I went out and that was really not often. Now we have been let free. I am starting to get friends. We are learning to read and write. It is fine. But we also get together and talk. That is still better." (Rydström 1973, p.59).

A group of women in Kenya, quoted by Riria (1983, p.12), expressed their wish to study in the following typical way:

> "We do not want to be cheated any more by the clerks who weigh our coffee, milk and other products. We want to help our children study."

The potential liberating effects of literacy for women as well as other experiences of female literacy learners are further addressed in Chapter 11.

9. Literacy Strategies – Implementation and Results

9.1 The Nature of Literacy Strategies

Literacy strategies (or "approaches") refer to the models of planning and implementation of literacy activities. The strategies adopted arise directly from the objectives of the deliverers of the programme, as regards both choosing literacy as the means of operation and making the contents and methods fit the overall aims.

Some of the most important questions to be considered for a literacy strategy are: What are the priority aims? Which groups should be included? What is the scale of the programme, in number of participants and period of time? How is motivation to be created or used? What is the framework of organization and supervision to be? What level of literacy is to be reached? What kind of teachers can or should be recruited? What training do they need? What languages, contents and methods should be used in the teaching programme? What kind of evaluation should be used? What follow-up activities or facilities exist or need to be created to attach to the programme?

In recent history, we can distinguish four approaches that have had or still have a major influence in the Third World:

1) The'Fundamental Education' approach, in today's terminology 'basic education' or 'general literacy';

2) The 'selective-intensive' Functional approach, launched through the EWLP, and to some extent still practiced as 'Functional Literacy;

3) The 'Conscientization' approach, inspired by Paulo Freire and often promoted by NGOs; and

4) The 'Mass Campaign' approach.

None of these are complete or exclusive strategies. They focus on different aspects and there certainly exist mixtures and variations of these approaches. All literacy programmes do not necessarily fit into

these categories, and some can be fitted into one while they are clearly influenced in certain aspects by others. The growing experience of literacy in the world means that even programmes with rather different aims may borrow successful aspects from each other.

We have already distinguished three main sets of objectives which inspire the launching of literacy programmes, two "positive" or "active" and one more "passive". These are:

- activities principally inspired by a wish to make political changes
- activities principally inspired by a wish to develop production
- activities intended to provide supply to demand, with a more "fundamental education" content.

As has been noted, it is seldom that these objectives are exclusive, and it is frequent that different interest groups push for, or use, a programme for ditferent objectives. There also exist a series of definitional problems, for the programme as for the researcher. One is the difference between stated aims and real aims, or between stated aims and the real resources and efforts put into meeting them. Another is the difference between efforts and results, where for a diversity of reasons internal or external to the programme, the results turn out to be very different to those intended or worked for. A third is change over time, where modifications and changes in the practice of literacy result from or imply changes in the aims themselves. It has been noted, for example, that often the aims and objectives are set irrealistically high (Carron and Bordia, 1985), which can demoralize both deliverers and learners and result in changes to (or even abandonment of) programmes in course. A fourth major problem is simply bad use of terminology: e.g. the word "campaign" is often used to describe a most un-campaign-like activity; the phrase "eradication of illiteracy" expresses a wish to reduce illiteracy to a more prestigious level; "literacy success" is used extremely amorphously, perhaps often too strictly. It is notable from the history of adult literacy work that in most cases the "success rate" between initial enrollment and final "pass" figures in any one round of a programme does not surpass 30 %.

Bearing these issues in mind, we will examine some of the strategies which have been used starting from a historical perspective, and then look at the details of those strategies which by and large are those in practice in the present. It should be stressed, however, that these literacy strategies overlap in time and space.

9.2 The 'Fundamental Education' Approach

'Fundamental Education' was promoted by Unesco from its creation, as referred to earlier. Literacy was only one of many activities aiming at "community development". Very little preoccupation was put into the questions of planning and organization, target groups or follow-up. Both adults and children were supposed to participate. Unesco stressed the importance of finding out the values and interests of the illiterates in order to adapt the programmes to the local culture and religion. (Regarding the objectives see Chapter 4).

During the period 1946-1964, when Fundamental Education was used as a concept, much intellectual preoccupation, promoted by Unesco, was firstly put into the question of language of instruction. A group of specialists who convened at Unesco in 1951 wrote a report on the use of vernacular languages in education (Unesco, 1953). Unesco strongly recommended the use of vernacular languages within the framework of 'Fundamental Education' as being the only efficient and correct pedagogical vehicle of teaching. After concluding this, a study of the most effective methods of teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue was promoted by Unesco. The study was carried out from 1952 to the end of 1954. The result is presented in William Gray's extensive survey: *The Teaching of Reading and Writing* first published in 1956 by Unesco. It is interesting to note that the purposes of the study imply that it was thought that improved teaching methods would be the solution to the problems of literacy programmes. Originally it was even suggested that the final study report should be prepared in the form of a teacher's manual, to be used throughout the world (Gray, 1969). Gray himself showed, however, the impossibility of such a result. The final report rather stresses that there is no universally applicable method and justifies the necessity to vary programmes and methods according to particular needs.

There seems to have been no systematic evaluation system connected to the adult literacy activities within 'Fundamental Education' programmes. One can only find very general assessments, all indicating the overall failure of Fundamental Education to make any substantial contribution to eradicating illiteracy. Some of the reasons for this failure are pointed out in Unesco documents: the target group was unspecified, the programmes were aimed at people without motivation, follow-up of literacy was neglected (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

Nonetheless, many of the current literacy programmes in operation continue to be similar to "Fundamental education" activities, in one sense retaining the preoccupations with integrating literacy into "community development", providing access to those who demand it, and concentrating most resources and efforts on the production of "good" material and teaching methods. In another sense, however, these general programmes (which will be discussed in Ch 9.6) have incorporated other experiences of planning and organization and have thus advanced beyond their original.

9.3 The Selective-Intensive Functional Approach

9.3.1 The EWLP Experience

The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) covered Functional literacy projects, supported by UNDP and Unesco, in eleven countries (Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Syria, and Tanzania) from 1967 to 1972.

The main objectives of the experimental programmes were

> "...to test and demonstrate the economic and social returns of literacy and, more generally, to study the mutual relations and influences which exist or may be established or strengthened between literacy training – particularly among the working population – and development." (UNDP/Unesco, 1976, p. 9).

It was also hoped that the EWLP would make it possible to "prepare the way for an eventual World Campaign for the Eradication of Mass Illiteracy." (UNDP/Unesco, 1976, p. 10).

The projects were selective in the sense that a specific target group of illiterates working within a specific economic activity in a specific region was selected for the experiment. They were intensive in the sense that they were limited in duration and considerable resources were concentrated on them.

The human capital theory, regarding education as an economic investment, was the ideology behind the design of Functional Literacy within the framework of EWLP. The meaning of functionality was therefore very limited to improved vocational skills or in general to the work-oriented contents of the literacy programmes. Much effort was put into the methodology of adapting the teaching materials to the specific skills needed within the target group of each

project. The teaching of the 3Rs was supposed to be work-oriented and integrated with the teaching of vocational skills. This kind of curricular design intended to ensure practical relevance.

The teaching method focused on "adult-centered" pedagogy. Active participation of the learners involved, both in the pedagogical process and in the form of "self-management", was recommended.

The principal of integration was meant to apply to the organization as well as to the preparation and presentation of the curricula. Institutional co-ordination between various national bodies and between these and international bodies was meant to be created.

The main concerns were however two: the **functional content** and **evaluation**. The high concern for evaluation is reflected in the main objectives and in the actual costs. While about 17 US dollars per person enrolled were spent on the implementation (including preparations), 26 US dollars per person enrolled were spent on research (Edström, 1976).

The whole evaluation process is, however, severly questioned in Unesco's *Critical Assessment* of the EWLP (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). This critical appraisal of the evaluation process is worth summarizing at some length.

Programme evaluation sought to detect successes of the EWLP in changing the new literates' relationship to their socio-economic milieu and in changing the milieu itself, and judged the influence of functional literacy plausible and favourable in about 42% of the observations. A number of questions arise, however, including those of insertion into what milieu, and on whose terms. The profile of the "successful" graduate is a rather "Westernized" one, and furthermore not a compendium of particularly attractive qualities, even for a Western setting. "Mastery of the milieu" again is seen in fairly narrow and technocratic terms, and "transformation of the milieu" according to fairly narrowly economic and individualistic criteria. Unfortunately, clearly designed programme objectives were never present in the EWLP programmes. There was also genuine and longstanding conflict between "technico-scientific" and "activist-pragmatist" approaches to the programme, and thus between "summative" and "formative" evaluation. The former tended to predominate, meaning that certain very important aspects of the programme were never examined or evaluated at all. Timing was not scheduled realistically. In all, "confusion as to the purpose of evaluation, a narrowly-focused and quantity-oriented evaluation design laden with a not always appropriate set of value structures that

tended to side-track rather than expedite evaluation, [and] chronic delays due in part to attempts to evaluate progress toward EWLP's imprecise goals weakened the self-assessment effort" (p. 156). Much of the data provided proved unreliable and/or invalid.

An outstanding illustration of the failure to achieve the objectives of evaluating the EWLP is given in a summary of the project in Algeria:

> "The Algerian project was one of the few among the experimental projects that made a serious attempt at evaluation. However, the evaluation studies suffered from a lack of continuity and sophistication and are, at best, inconclusive as to the effects and/or benefits of the project." (Unesco/UNDP 1976, p. 25).

The Unesco/UNDP assessment report (1976) also concludes that the other objective of EWLP ("to prepare the way for an eventual World Campaign..."):

> "...is certainly no nearer than when the programme began... Neither literacy or development as a whole can be willed into existence by international agen-cies..." (p. 190).

The figures available on learning results are very limited, incomplete and based on doubtful reliability. "Test levels and criteria varied widely from subject to subject, context to context, project to project and within projects." (Unesco/UNDP 1976, p. 174). In some countries the new literates achieved a level corresponding to two years of primary schooling, in others a level corresponding to four years of primary school. However, it is very clear from existing data that the dropout rate was in general high, on average about 50 %, ranging from 37 % in Tanzania to 68 % in Sudan (Edström 1976). The over-all success percentage among initial enrollees can be calculated at around 12 % on the basis of rounded up figures given in different places in the *Critical Assessment* (p.11: "over 120.000 were made functionally literate"; p.174: "the million-odd illiterates reached by the programme"). The overwhelming majority of those made literate through the EWLP projects came from the Tanzanian project (96.900, p. 174). This fact is surprisingly enough not commented at all in the *Critical Assessment*. But it is logically consistent with the general conclusions of the assessment, that successful literacy can only be achieved when it is integrated in a national development plan where the political will to implement literacy is clearly articulated in theory and practice.

The final results of EWLP are said to have led to a series of lessons and recommendations on literacy efforts.

The conclusions stress that "functionality" in EWLP terms was much too technical. Especially in its early stages EWLP tended to accept the idea of the "underdeveloped" person as the main impediment to development, which is clearly false on several grounds. Further, the theory of development prominent at the time was one of economic growth based on technology, which in turn implied technical know-how as the chief prerequisite to foster it. Consistent with the approach, EWLP tended to view the design and planning of literacy as an essentially technical exercise, whereas in fact the problems are only partly technical. Social, cultural, and political factors are as important, if not more so.

Gillette and Ryan (1983) point out that in many EWLP cases, literacy was "functionalized in economic terms ... resulting in the virtual exclusion of female participation." (p. 15).

The Unesco/UNDP report (1976) makes many critical comments on the role of the experts trying to "market" a "pre-packaged product". A new notion of the expert as an international "animateur" rather than an importer of precise skills and concepts is recommended for the future. It is noted as unfortunate that not more attention was given to the existence of earlier successful mass literacy campaigns, nor to the wishes of some member governments to replicate them.

Problems of co-ordination between various institutions both within the nations and between national and international bodies arose repeatedly. "Self-management" by the learners involved failed to materialize in almost all settings.

Many of the pedagogical experiences are also critically analysed. The teachers were mainly recruited among professional teachers, which was felt to be inappropriate. For the most part, integration was not achieved, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic were not allied with the practical material to be learned. Inadequate provision for follow-up reading materials was a serious problem in many national projects. The number of drop-outs and degree of absenteeism may have reflected material that was not, after all, "relevant" enough, and/or an inadequate psychological climate at local level. Concerning methods, the report concludes that it seems advisable to use a variety of methods and techniques. The best mix and balance remains to be found.

On the subject of language of instruction, the EWLP evaluators number among EWLP's successes the giving of a general strong impetus to "rehabilitation" of Third World tongues as a medium of instruction. The multiplicity of languages thus used created, on the other hand, a number of problems, e.g. of transcription, translation,

etc. The evaluators concluded that the closer the language used to present the content of the course is to the worker's everyday language, the more effective the literacy programme.

Impacts of EWLP on further educational action are described as "limited, fragmented and incidental".

Finally, we consider one of the evaluators' recommendations worthwhile quoting:

> "Literacy policy and planning must seek to integrate national necessities with the needs expressed by different social groups. No literacy process can be effective unless these groups realize that literacy serves their own interest as well as those of the nation.
>
> For this reason, literacy must often be linked to changes in other fields, such as economic and social reforms (it is useless to teach a farmer to increase productivity if the greater part of the fruit of this labour goes to a landlord)." (p. 191).

9.3.2 The Economic Literacy Approach Today

Apart from the Tanzanian experience, which blossomed into full-blown campaigns over twelve years, (and will be treated in more detail below), the EWLP experience was unsuccessful. However, it did not result in the burial of "Functional Literacy" which on the contrary has continued to be applied in many countries, notably in Africa and Asia, with some modification resulting from the EWLP experience and from other strategies. The concept of "Functionality" has in effect been broadened to include "awareness training" and a wider range of contents than the directly productive skills training involved in the EWLP. Nonetheless, the basic ideological underpinning (human capital theory) and the objectives (direct impact on raising production) remain essentially the same. Its chosen point of impact is the economic unit or the development programme, and its target population is selected from the producers involved. A deal of the content aims at transmitting better production techniques for the produce of the given area of impact, at least in theoretical form (the practice often being reserved for direction and supervision by other authorities in the "development programme"). As such, the "Functional" programme tends to remain small-scale and highly selective, though occasionally an intention is expressed to gradually widen it to cover a mass audience and proceed in this way to eradicate illiteracy (the only successful case so far being Tanzania). Generally the functional programme has no time limits set in advance, and the integration (in one way or another) of production and literacy often means that the programme of basic literacy covers two years or more (ICAE 1979, p. 46).

Levine (1982) contends that the term "Functional Literacy" is now used to justify everything and anything connected with basic skills education for adults. Further he argues:

> "These varying conceptions of functional literacy encourage the idea that relatively low levels of individual achievement ... will directly result in a set of universally desired outcomes, such as employment, personal and economic growth, job advancement, and social integration ... however ... the attainment of functional literacy rarely produces such outcomes." (p. 250).

Where successes have been registered, it is generally the case that in reality the literacy activity was situated within a powerful mobilization process or a broader process of change whose benefits to the learners were evident. The approach, as a selective small-scale activity, suffers from the problem that it cannot rely for the mobilization of participants on a general atmosphere of priority, urgency, progress, change, mass movement. It has to show concretely that it is worthwhile for the participants. A case from Iran is worth citing (Furter, quoted in ICAE 1979), where the potential students demanded to be paid for attending classes, as the programme was an answer to the problems of the organizers and not to those of the learners.

In relation to **organization and supervision**, there seems to be a vast range of different approaches. An initial variable is the size and selectivity of the programme, and the kind of economic project it is inserted in. Another is the range of intentions for the future, as to degree and form of expansion or transfer. All of these factors influence whether a national coordinating body is mounted or not, who takes organizational responsibility, where materials are prepared, and so on. Usually pedagogical supervision is undertaken by a small team based in the area of the programme. The recent tendency is, however, to mount a specific literacy "bureaucracy" from national level and downwards.

The **selection, mobilization, and training of teachers** is somewhat more difficult than in more general programmes. In small projects, it is often possible to pay the teachers, but any intention to spread the programme more widely makes this a dangerous tactic. Once the right to a salary is established, all teachers will demand it. On the other hand, the long-term nature of the programme and its lack of an atmosphere of priority and urgency make it very difficult to mobilize volunteer teachers. In principle also, given the "functionality" of the programme, one would expect a long training programme (which represents higher investments and makes teacher drop-out

costly) in order to transmit both the techniques of production and of literacy teaching. However, it is clear that in general the training courses actually given are short (2-3 weeks) (Carron and Bordia, 1985, p. 31), probably for "cost-benefit" reasons, a factor which must at least undermine the real "functionality" of the teaching. In counterweight, usually the supervisory bodies are expected to carry out continuous in-service training, and the other structures of the project are supposed to do the "real" technical training outside the literacy classes.

The **choice of language** for the programme has been a serious obstacle. Language is often a complex national political issue, around which the state treads warily. It is also clear that, for the programme to be Functional, it must transmit Functional language skills also. In employment situations, workers may have a variety of mother tongues; even rurally-based development projects may often cover more than one local language group, as well as having personnel speaking other languages, maybe only the official one. A variety of strategies has been used, all of which fall down on one of two problems. Either the (predominant) local language is used exclusively, which is not **very** Functional in a national sense, and which may upset the students as being a way of providing an "inferior" education; or somehow (local-official, franca-official, bilingual, or just official), the official language is reached, usually involving a considerable lengthening of the literacy programme, which becomes littered with failures and drop-outs along the way. There is no easy solution to the problem, which requires a political approach and a careful consultation with all involved (including the literacy students!) (Carron & Bordia, 1985, p.23).

The **methods used** obviously seek to integrate (at least a theoretical) elementary technical training and a few other topics of wider concern into a literacy training. This requires careful elaboration of material, and, to be Functional, material often has to be developed for each and every project area according to local produce etc., a costly and time-consuming process. It has been pointed out that common problems with an economic approach to literacy are, to emphasize narrow production techniques at the expense of all else (including the participants' interest), or to err towards either all productive skill training and no literacy or all literacy and no productive skill training. Behind this problem of how to integrate training of literacy skills with that of other functional skills lies the tendency to "try to achieve too many things at the same time" in one literacy programme (ICAE 1979, Carron and Bordia 1985). This tendency leaves the field open for individual teachers to give priority to the area they feel most familiar with.

The demands of rural production often mean that literacy is done in slack seasons and dropped in peak seasons, which can create long gaps and relapses in the literacy component as well as dissociate the technical theory from the technical practice through a long time lag. For these reasons, there have been some attempts to make literacy a concentrated programme with long hours over a short period. A necessary characteristic of the Functional programme is the inclusion of an arithmetic course, which can be a major mobilizing factor.

The **level of literacy** to be reached has varied in practice from programme to programme. The problems faced here are somewhat similar to those faced by all programmes – a high level requires a long course, a low level is not very useful. Language problems play a hindering role in this situation. Many programmes have tried to face the problem by dividing literacy up into a set of levels with their own certificates and tests, to give the learners a sense of getting somewhere. It seems rare, funnily enough, for the testing procedures to cover whether the technical content has been learned, or to provide any kind of "professional" certificate. In general, we have not been able to find any clear indication as to whether literacy successfully learnt through work-oriented curricula is better learnt or longer retained, or whether the curricula have in fact had a notable impact on the long term on production techniques and productivity.

A **post-literacy follow-up** to a Functional programme presents a variety of problems. If the programme in fact considered literacy as part of functionality, it would seem important to preserve and extend it. Several experiences show that the mere existence of a follow-up possibility can be a major motivating force for the literacy component itself. However, the "applied" nature of the programme may hinder a direct transition to higher levels of the school system, so a more Functional applied follow-up would appear most logical. This alternative is extremely hard to implement, however, as the technical content needs to be more advanced, and finding teachers to teach it becomes more difficult. Tanzania (see Andersson, Male and Westergren, 1984) is currently facing up to this problem. The country had a large number of different functional literacy programmes (13 in all), so the logical continuation would be an even larger and more complex set of applied post-literacy courses. But just the trouble and expense of researching, writing, printing and distributing all this material is a major problem, requiring enormous input of human, material and financial resources, before even the teacher training problem is tackled. Even so, one ray of sunshine

seems to be that it is easier to mobilize new-literates for post-literacy than illiterates for literacy. However, the experience seems to show that post-literacy follow-up will have to be a diversity of formal and non-formal strategies rather than a direct Functional continuation.

9.4 The 'Conscientization' Approach

9.4.1 Paulo Freire's Development of the Approach

The 'Conscientization' approach to literacy of which Paulo Freire is the major spokesman, was primarily formulated in the contexts of North-Eastern Brazil in the early sixties and briefly implemented throughout Brazil prior to the military coup in 1964, when Freire was imprisoned for a period. Other experiences led or influenced by Freire himself have taken place in Chile in the late sixties, and in Guinea Bissau in the late seventies. During the seventies Freire's educational theory had a wide influence in the whole Western world, particularly among radical educators and progressive religious agencies. His literacy theory and practice are still inspiring many educationists (especially in Latin America, where projects are organized by non-governmental groups or organizations), and have achieved a certain status in Unesco contexts.

Freire's publications (1972a, 1972b, 1976, 1978, 1985) deal extensively with theories on the nature of human beings, the formation of human consciousness, the nature of human oppression and the liberation process in general. His ideology is a mixture of catholism, marxism, existentialism, and a general humanism. We will not try to summarize Freire's whole ideology here, but rather try to describe his view on the literacy process itself.

Freire's literacy theory and practice aim at making it possible for the oppressed illiterates to become aware that they can change their own situation. The main task of adult education is to bring about a process of critical reflection that leads to action and change. Education is seen as an element in the necessary process of human liberation.

No education is neutral. It is either domesticating or liberating. Domesticating methods and contents determine each other reciprocally, just as liberating methods and contents do.

Dialogue and **participation** are key elements of liberating education. The educational programme is determined through a participatory

investigation together with the people in the area chosen for literacy, on the culture, the living conditions, kind of existing awareness, existing contradictions, the language and vocabulary used, etc. A series of "codified pictures" would introduce the whole literacy course in order to motivate the participants for literacy. A picture would also introduce each learning unit, which would stimulate discussion and awareness about different key themes linked to peoples' daily lives. Then the word – characterizing the picture – would be presented, which through its syllables and derived syllable families, should stimulate the learners to create new words or even sentences by recombining syllables. The "generative" words together with the pictures would substitute a ready made Primer, elaborated from above.

> "If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language." (Freire, 1972b, p. 29).

It is not sufficient, argues Freire, for illiterates psychologically and mechanically to dominate reading and writing. They must dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness, to understand what is read, what is written and why one writes. This cannot possibly be achieved if the educator, or teacher, remains aloof from his or her pupils and merely donates skills and information as one who knows. The role of the educator is to enter into dialogue with illiterates about concrete situations and offer them the instruments with which they can teach themselves to read and write. Such teaching cannot be imposed from the top, as it were, but can only take place in a shared investigation, in a problem-raising situation between educator and educatee. Thus the learning of content and the learning process are inextricably bound together.

Freire does not provide any theories or practical guidance on how to organize a literacy project administratively, nor does he even mention the question of evaluation. The questions of how to recruit and train teachers and still more important, how to mobilize or motivate people to enrol is not included in his literacy writings.

> "What does a total concrete project look like in terms of the acted-upon strategies of approach, the actual materials constructed, the particular contributions of a given group of illiterates, the acts of refinement of the materials, the outcomes which are attributable to the project and the kinds of internal or external obstacles encountered? In short, where is the **evaluative dimension** from which literacy workers disposed to the

Freire approach can get a sense of the ability of his theoretical-practical assertions to deliver rather than to deceive?... The specifics of past actions in literacy projects are essential to share in detail, for in their report is the vital knowledge of tested but unsuccessful hypotheses as well as those which have worked." (Bugbee, 1973, p. 434).

It is difficult to get an overview of Freire-inspired literacy projects in order to appraise their results. Humbert (1977), who describes several Freirian projects, provides little concrete detail. There are, however, many and varied reactions to Freire's works.

"By far the largest and most enthusiastic are those who write from a religious perspective similar to that of Freire himself. Indeed conscientization has become a commonly employed term in the rhetoric of many church-based agencies." (Mackie, 1980, p.8)

In Latin America, the influence of Freire on literacy is so widespread and the interpretations of the conscientization concept so broad and varied, that:

"...today there hardly exists any government literacy programme that does not define itself as "conscientizing." (Torres, 1985, p.118).

Torres contends that Freire himself, through his early works, is responsible for having separated conscientization from its political dimension.

"When it is not defined by whom, for what, nor how the people should liberate themselves, the "liberation" and "conscientization" concepts have become so vague and imprecise that they can be used for anything by anyone." (ibid.).

An illustration of how Freire's ideas can be misused is the Brazilian government-sponsored literacy "movement", MOBRAL, which used the form, but contradicted the content and aims of Freire's pedagogy. It has been claimed to be successful by the government and for example by the World Bank (1974), but other reports (Selander, 1977) have shown how the statistics on attendance and success were falsified by the teachers, who got paid according to the number of participants in their classes.

Some of the most important critical remarks on the limitations of Freire's theory have been made by marxists, as, for example, in the following way by Selander (1977):

"Just as little as a school system can change the society it is part of, just as little can a literacy movement change a society. A liberating pedagogy... must be linked to a struggle that aims at changing the whole economic and political system. Only a political movement is appropriate for this and only a political movement, that is rooted among workers and peasants, is capable of achieving this."

The question is, what does and what should "liberating" education lead to. According to Freire's original theories the answer to this question should not be predetermined. It is the dialogue and "conscientization" process that determine what actions or what specific ideology it leads to. This is not realistic and therefore idealistic, because, whoever is organizing and/or teaching has some kind of specific political aim or ideology built into their programme. If the educators pretend not to have a specific political/religious aim, then the process easily becomes manipulative.

The above-referred political objections to Freire's pedagogy can be found in RISK (1970), Bugbee (1973), Huet (1973), Selander (1977), Mackie (1980), Torres (1985).

Bugbee (1973) also puts the following question:

> "What is the undergirding **discipline** which guides and activates not only the research team to conduct a preliminary thematic investigation, but also the people who are the project's co-authors and beneficiaries? Is Freire suggesting that this crucial element may stem from beneficent governments, the World Council of Churches, Unesco or elsewhere?" (p. 433).

The political implications of Freire-inspired conscientizing literacy activities have also been demonstrated by repressive measures by the ruling power structures against participants and leaders of such programmes. When this has been directed against spontaneous actions against the exploiters, without there having been any organizational links to social movements or a political strategy, it may well have much more negative than positive consequences for the participants (see for example RISK, 1970).

There are a few examples of Freire-inspired government sponsored programmes, which because of their political implications of action or potential action against the government, led to the suspension of their national directors. This happened in Peru 1974, and in Portugal 1976 (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

The growing experience and reflection on these political issues in relation to popular adult education, including literacy, has led to a more explicitly political theory and practice among adult educators who advocate consciousness-oriented literacy, including Freire himself. In later interviews and publications, he has clearly expressed his views on the political implications of his own pedagogical theories and of education in general, for example:

> "Today I would have worked for a stronger political organizing towards political aims and to a greater extent linked the work to the working class, because the ruling class does not commit suicide." (Selander, 1977, p. 13).

"When I began my educational practice as a young man I was not clear about the potential political consequences. I thought very little about the political implications and even less about the political nature of my thinking and practice. Yet, the political nature of these reflections was and is a reality. The political makeup of education is independent of the educator's subjectivity; that is, it is independent if the educator is conscious of this political makeup, which is never neutral. When an educator finally understands this, she or he can never again escape the political ramifications. An educator has to question himself or herself about the options that are inherently political, though often disguised as pedagogical to make them acceptable within the existing structure. Thus, making choices is most important. Educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working. The more conscious and committed they are, the more they understand that their role as educators requires them to take risks, including a willingness to risk their own jobs." (Freire, 1985, p.179).

The process of practical implementation of Freire's theory and recommended practice of literacy presents a variety of difficulties, depending on many factors apart from the political orientation and purpose, such as the socio-economic context, the human and material resources available, the recruitment and training of teachers, the time factor, the scale of the programme, etc. The ideal situation of designing a literacy curriculum and teaching material based on local participatory investigations for each target group or local community often requires highly-educated staff in quantity if the programme is to cover large areas or large numbers of adults. For a national programme, it also implies problems of coordination and control. In practice, Freire has recognized the need for literacy primers for general national use, for example, in Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tomé and Nicaragua, where he worked as an adviser while the primers were prepared. The literacy programmes in Guinea-Bissau, based initially on a Freirian approach and subsequently on other experimental work, have had very little success, due to serious language problems, organizational weaknesses, staff shortages in quantity and quality, and lack of political will, mobilization, and support (Harisam, 1983; Ballara, 1984).

"... the Freirian "strategy" or "method" ... reflected an utopian view of the social realities of Guinea-Bissau, and ... served neither as a means to implementing social change nor for teaching reading and writing." (Harisam, 1983, p.346).

Experiences show, moreover, that the application of the teaching methods advocated by Freire, that is, the "global" method for reading and writing with an accompanying dialogue, where the teacher's role is to promote the learner's participation and creativity

and to learn from the learners, is extremely demanding and difficult to achieve. This is especially true in the context of larger programmes or campaigns, where volunteer teachers with relatively low educational qualifications and short training constitute the teaching staff.

Torres (1985) points out that even when the conscientization approach has been inserted into popular education projects with "clear political orientation", it has in practice often been limited to a "dialogue" that in itself turns rather into a kind of oral questionnaire, where the educator asks and the learners answer, than a moment of reciprocal communication. Her analysis of the political mobilization and awareness effects of the literacy campaigns carried out in Cuba and Nicaragua is interesting in this context. It was not so much the contents of the readers, nor the dialogues, nor the revolutionary slogans, that explain the strong political/ideological impact of these campaigns. "It was first of all the process itself, the very close association between the literacy teachers and the learners" (p.121) and the integration of literacy and the revolutionary process as such.

The difficulties of achieving participation in real social transformation through conscientization-oriented adult literacy, and the question of under what circumstances there are "spaces" for such actions, are discussed in the Latin American context in C.A.Torres (1981). These issues continue to be debated among radical educators there, and further studies and clarification of these questions in the adult literacy context would be worth while.

According to many experiences (including our own) and in view of the critical comments mentioned above, Freire's pedagogy has widely contributed to the understanding of the literacy teaching-learning process and has inspired many literacy workers and experts to develop their ideas and methods in certain aspects. In Latin America, there is an ever-growing movement of "popular education" which is strongly influenced by Freire's theories. Many NGOs all over the world working with basic adult education are likewise applying a critical consciousness approach, where literacy is a component integrated into a movement for social change and the pedagogical principles are learner-centred. Freire provides an important source of critical reflection and inspiration for literacy practitioners, through his criticisms of domesticating and elitist approaches to literacy and his insistence on the alternative role of the educator as someone who shares experiences with the learners, teaching and at the same time learning from them. The conscientization approach does not, however, provide sufficient guidelines for a whole literacy strategy, and contains non-applicable elements, especially for large-scale government programmes.

9.4.2 Popular Education

As has been noted in Chapter 7, and above, Freire's theories of conscientization form one of the bases for the growing movement of popular education in Latin America and elsewhere. The praxis of popular education has been based on, and has developed, the theory of the relations between class struggle, political strategy, and educational action. Adult literacy as such is only a sub-heading within the dialectic conjunction of political organization and popular initiative underlying the theory and activities of popular education. Learning of literacy is only one possible outcome from such activities, and does not occupy the central position it once assumed in Freire's pedagogy. Certainly, a popular education movement may be built around a literacy learning activity, in the interests of popular mobilization, participation, and organization, and the literacy methods then used would be close to those suggested by Freire.

However, as literacy is only one subordinate component of popular education, we have decided not to devote further attention to this whole fascinating development in this book.

9.5 The Mass Campaign Approach

9.5.1 International Moves to Promote Mass Campaigns

Mass literacy campaigns have always been difficult but, particularly in revolutionary societies, aiming at socialism, they have been successfully implemented. This literacy approach is a mass approach that seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation literate within a particular time frame. Literacy is seen as a means to a comprehensive set of ends – economic, social, structural, cultural and political.

In the sixties, when Unesco concentrated on the EWLP, the already successful experiences in Vietnam, China and Cuba were not considered by Unesco for formulating general recommendations or even for international discussion. The reason for this was certainly not lack of information. A Unesco Commission presented a report on the Cuban Literacy Campaign in 1965 (Unesco, 1965), analyzing in detail its success. While the Cuban campaign took place in 1961, it was awarded honourable mention by a Unesco Jury only in 1967:

> "For one of the most remarkable efforts to mobilize public opinion in support of literacy work, as a result of which the country's illiteracy rate fell from 25 per cent to 3.9 per cent." (Unesco, 1968, p. 74).

In the seventies new successful literacy campaigns have been conducted in Tanzania (1971-1983), Southern Vietnam (1975-1978), Somalia (1973-1975), Ethiopia (1979-), Nicaragua (1979-1980); and in many other countries mass campaigns have been initiated with longer-term perspectives.

In the light of these new experiences, together with the failures to achieve considerable progress in other literacy attempts, Unesco decided to promote a discussion among member states on the possibilities and promise of the literacy campaign as a strategy for the eradication of illiteracy. The reasons for this are many: successes with campaigns, the growing opinion that literacy is a human right, the feeling that mass literacy will not only promote development but also help redress oppression and injustice (a feeling promoted by Freire's ascendency to international legitimacy). It is also possible that the near-monopoly of countries professing socialism on campaign successes, and the resulting legitimization of socialism, made governments and organizations which were previously impervious to such activities, join their support to the use of the strategy, at least verbally. One may also suspect that it is internationally and nationally comfortable to be able to point to attempts at large-scale literacy, as a visible sign of government concern with human rights, poverty and oppression, without fundamentally doing anything else about these issues.

As a basis for this discussion, in October 1979, Unesco through the International Council of Adult Education, commissioned a study that would undertake a critical analysis of reputedly successful mass literacy campaigns of the 20th century. The study written by Professor H.S. Bhola (1982) analysed eight campaigns, those of USSR, Vietnam, China, Cuba, Burma, Brazil, Tanzania and Somalia; and in a memorandum addressed to decision-makers summarized and analyzed the lessons of these experiences. The discussion of this study was one of the objectives of the International Seminar on Campaigning for Literacy held in Udaipur 1982 (reported in Bhola 1983). The seminar was organized by ICAE, the Seva Mandir Agency in India, and the German Foundation for International Development, while Unesco was present as a participant.

The Udaipur Seminar adopted a Literacy Declaration, calling for massive literacy efforts:

> "Only specific campaigns with clearly defined targets can create the sense of urgency, mobilize popular support and marshall all possible resources to sustain mass action, continuity and follow up.

It is not enough merely to teach skills linked to general economic development if the poorer classes remain as exploited and disadvantaged as before. A literacy campaign must be seen as a necessary part of a national strategy for overcoming poverty and injustice." (Bhola, 1983, p. 245).

Bhola (1983, p. 222) points out that:

"Political will is prior, but technology is the great enabler in the planning and implementation of a successful literacy campaign... The basic processes involved are:

- Articulation of the nation's political will
- Temporary institutionalization of the first policy initiative and later
- Development of a comprehensive policy-making and legitimizing organ
- Study and diagnosis of preconditions
- General mobilization of the public
- Establishment of structures of mass participation
- Development of inter-ministerial and inter-agency structures
- Pre-operational preparation
- Implementation of development and instructional actions
- Evaluation of context, processes and results, and
- Design and establishment of post-literacy programmes."

We have chosen to quote this whole list in order to show the importance given to political, institutional, organizational and mobilizational aspects, as compared to pedagogical methods or contents for example.

The prevailing tendency in literacy discussions focused on organization, administration, planning, monitoring, and evaluation rather than on methods and contents as earlier. This is reflected by the quite recent involvement of the International Institute of Educational Planning in literacy activities.

Successful literacy campaigns have been conducted in many different ways, using various methods of teaching and evaluation, aiming at different levels of literacy, etc. The major trait which seems to underlie the success of major campaigns is the ideology of the state, which determines that literacy be used as a central strategy for achieving (or starting to achieve) overall ideological goals, notably a restructuring of social classes and their relations to power. A whole component of this restructuring is political, and its form mass mobilization, which explains in part why a literacy campaign with political form and content should be used. It is thus questionable whether the

mass campaign strategy can simply be transported from one nation and political system to another and yield success everywhere. Even between nations with similar revolutionary socialist ideologies, campaigns have taken a series of forms, according to local perceptions and capacities, and yielded results at varying levels of short-term and long-term success. In countries which profess socialism, but not of a Marxian kind, a similar range of forms and results has been found. In other, non-socialist countries, campaigns have been tried with less success, or activities have been launched under the name of "campaign" but with little other resemblance to one. To clarify, "campaign" is a word from military sources implying large-scale movement, clearly-defined objectives and targets, allocation of priority status and sufficient resources, and a clear time demarcation. It describes actions, not plans and hopes (Bhola, 1983, p.206).

States achieving success in campaigns have had the political commitment, motivation and power to be able to organize an effective mobilization of all human, institutional and material resources needed. For this mobilization all available means of propaganda in favour of literacy are used to create motivation among the illiterates and among voluntary literacy workers to use their time for literacy classes in all possible settings. Different ways of rewarding success – mostly symbolical – together with social pressure to attend classes, have maintained mobilization high and prevented high dropout rates. For quick positive results, literacy has been defined at a low level, but for its retention and use, links were established for continuing education in follow-up programmes, and for active participation in the social, political and economic life of the country.

Centralized policy formulation with decentralized responsibility to local authorities and organizations for implementation and management have characterized successful literacy campaigns.

Within the range of experiences which merit the title "campaign", at least over some important period of their implementation, two major strategies can be identified, which we will discuss separately below: the "one-off" eradication campaign, and the longer-term "eradication by a series of campaigns", which present some rather distinct features and divergent problems.

9.5.2 "One-off" Mass Campaigns to Eradicate Illiteracy

There are a few existing examples of very rapid reduction of illiteracy through the means of a short mass campaign: Cuba (1961; illiteracy reduced from 24 % to 4 %), Nicaragua (1979-80; from 50 % to

13 %), southern Vietnam (1976-78; from 25 % to 14 %), and Somalia (1974-75; from 95 % to 30 %).

The principal factor in their campaign organization and success appears to have been the recent conquest of state power by a movement strongly characterized by its popular support and by its intention to revolutionize the social and economic structure of society.

Three additional factors appear (from the successes and failures) to have been crucial:

a) With the possible exception of Somalia, the illiteracy level was around or below 50 % on starting the campaign, and the absolute number of illiterates targeted for involvement did not exceed 1,5 million in any of the four cases. This made it possible to cover all the illiterates at one go, in small classes. (In the case of Somalia, which is in many ways the most "marginal" of the four examples, the statistics are confused by the introduction of a new, Roman script for the language, which made almost everyone technically illiterate. This meant that there first had to be a campaign to teach those already literate to read the new script, before tackling the rural areas with their mixture of literates and semi-literates in other scripts, as well as "pure" illiterates).

b) Three of the states launched their campaigns within two years after the movement acceded to power (and Somalia within five years after), while popular enthusiasm was at its height.

c) All four countries have one principal majority language, which facilitated mobilization, writing of materials, teacher training, provision of follow-up, etc.

The **objectives** for the campaigns were clear: to involve everyone in the eradication of illiteracy, with a view to general politicization and incorporation (immediate and future) of the masses in the socio-economic transformations to be carried out. The illiterates would acquire the information and skills needed to participate in changing society, while the literate population, as teachers, would be (re) educated by their contact with the working masses. The campaigns were executed over a period of one to two years.

Mobilization was effected, as mentioned above, by the use of all available means of public communication, allied both to symbolic and material rewards and to social pressure on the unwilling. A key feature was not to allow the mobilization activities to relax at all

during the whole period of the campaign. The very aim of the campaign, to eradicate illiteracy over a short period, was generally mobilizing as a significant and quickly attainable goal. The military-style organization of campaigns, brigades, offensives, marches, flags, ... gave a general impression of purpose and collective engagement. In addition, Arnove and Graff (1987) put weight on the leadership of a charismatic figurehead, though this factor is not very evident in the cases of Nicaragua or southern Vietnam.

The **organizational and supervisory structure** arose naturally from the aims of the campaign. As it was everybody's campaign, its structures incorporated all organized bodies in the society – ministries, schools, factories, committees, mass organizations, etc. – and involved them in the mobilization of resources, teachers and students. Central and local literacy committees were organized, involving high-ranking officials at the given level of the organizations mentioned, to facilitate rapid decision-making. The classes themselves were generally small, five students or less, making it easy to organize meeting-times. In general, the voluntary teachers lived with families in the community and participated in productive work in the area. School teachers and literacy instructors kept close contact with the classes and gave support to the teachers. Where more than two students were to be in a class, efforts were made to ensure a similar starting level.

Initial **teacher training** was of necessity short, around five days. The closing of classes in secondary schools to provide literacy teachers also provided rooms for the training. In Cuba and Nicaragua, the teachers also received a detailed teaching manual. In two of the countries with minority languages (Nicaragua, Vietnam), these groups were mostly left for a later "second round" drive in their own languages.

The **curriculum content** largely focused around the new state's historical origins and policies for the future. The **methods** were rather traditional "tutorial" pedagogy in practice, although Nicaragua, with some previous experience of popular education during the insurrection, inclined the methodology towards conscientization. In Vietnam, "methodological emulation" was launched, the teachers being encouraged to build up their own methodology around the literacy material, and the most successful among them being rewarded. The objectives in the four cases were oriented towards rapid literacy teaching, so numeracy was not included in the criteria for literacy (in Vietnam, reading numbers was included), and, where an arithmetic programme was prepared, it was for voluntary applica-

tion towards the end of the campaign in more advanced and motivated groups. The literacy tests were formulated on criteria set at central level – abilities in reading a text, taking dictation, free writing – and when the teacher reckoned that the group had reached that level, the local literacy committee would assist in verification. Pass certificates were handed out in public ceremonies. In Cuba and Nicaragua, the students concluded by writing a letter to the political leader(s) of the country. A survey of examples of these letters reveals a large variation in the literates' writing capacity.

In all four cases, the problem of **regression to illiteracy** strongly posed itself. In Somalia, important results were achieved in the "modernizing" and mobilization of the society, but various factors resulted in a weak provision of follow-up and thus in large-scale relapse into illiteracy. In Cuba, all learners were given a follow-up reading book at once, and vast efforts were made to incorporate everyone in more formal follow-up classes, with the result that after twenty years the country could announce that the "Battle for (universal) 6th Grade" had been won. In Vietnam, use was made of the school system and of 3rd Grade curricula upwards to provide "popular complementary education". In Nicaragua, material for adults with the distinct taste of a primary school curriculum was produced to be used in mass follow-up classes, but this option was soon called into question as being too formal and childish, and antagonistic to the principles of popular education. The last three countries have all worked hard to produce accessible and cheap reading material, in the form of books, newspapers and magazines, Cuba having done most in this regard. At the same time, they have put much effort into attaining universal primary education, which is of course fundamental to preventing the resurgence of illiteracy and must accompany any serious attempt to eradicate it.

References for this section:

General: Bhola 1982, 1983, (all four countries).
Cuba: Unesco 1965; Levin, Lind, et al. 1979.
Vietnam: *Literacy Work* 1978–9; Carron and Bordia, 1985.
Nicaragua: Torres 1985, Miller 1985.

9.5.3 Eradication of Illiteracy by a Series of Campaigns

The first example of "a campaign" to eradicate illiteracy that took the form of a series of campaigns, is that of the USSR (1919–1939) where illiteracy was reduced from 70 % to 13 %. This was followed

by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945–1958; 7 % illiteracy at the end), China (1950–1966, 1976–; 85 % to 25 % now), and Korea (?). The seventies saw a large rise in the use of a "campaign series" strategy: Tanzania (1971–1983; 67 % to 20 %), Iraq (1978–1980; 18 % to 0 (?)), Burma (1969–1972 and 1976–1981, 1.3 million literates), Ethiopia (1979–; 93 % to 42 % est. so far), Mozambique (1978–; 95 % to 70 % in 1988), Angola (1976–; 85 % to 62 % est. in 1986).

The characteristic feature of the campaign series is to run a sequence of campaigns, each with its own enrollment and literacy target, within a more general (5 to 10 year) plan for the eradication of illiteracy. The enrollment target is often further defined in terms of given priorities for the campaign in question – by area (urban/rural, selected districts, etc.), by political or economic priority (cadres, workers, collecti-vized peasants, etc.), by language (elaboration of programmes in the major language(s) first), by age group (usually the age of 45 is the upper limit to the priority), and so on.

The **objectives** behind the campaign series strategy are usually similar to the "one–off" strategy: political mobilization and sensibilization. As far as we can assess, the countries which have registered successes in at least some of the campaigns in the series and in making notable inroads into illiteracy all profess a socialist ideology. In Bhola (1983) a series of other countries are treated as "new campaign countries", but in practice, of these only Botswana and Kenya seem to have enrolled and kept significant numbers in classes, and in the former case the country itself describes its activities as a "programme" with little of the mass mobilization characteristic of a campaign (ibid., p. 80–87). Kenyan figures for the period 1979–1983 (Dave et al. 1985, p.32) indicate a total enrolment of nearly 1.9 million people but only a 4 % success rate.

There seem to be three principal reasons behind choosing a "stepwise" strategy. The first is the very high level of illiteracy and/or the very large absolute number of illiterates, which makes reaching all of them at once very hard, finding an adequate number of teachers difficult, and providing adequate structured follow–up almost impossible. The second is that the country's situation of underdevelopment is such that it decides that it does not have the infrastructure and it cannot spare all the resources that would be needed for a "one-off" campaign. An additional encumbrance for many of the countries named has been that they have been in a state of war, which further reduces the possibilities of making literacy an absolute priority and of setting aside sufficient resources to combat illiteracy.

A third is often the large diversity of languages, which complicates planning and mobilization. In the case of choosing one language for the campaigns, the second-language situation encumbers and prolongs the teaching programme for many classes, while, in the case of choosing several languages, the production and distribution of materials and the training of teachers, as well as organizing the follow-up, become a more lengthy and complex process. Tanzania had the advantage of being able to use for literacy an African lingua franca, Swahili, spoken by most Tanzanians. In Ethiopia the multi-lingual problem has been tackled by producing materials in 15 different languages. Mozambique and Angola chose initially on political grounds to teach literacy in the official language, Portuguese – a second language for the illiterate population – as an instrument for promoting national unity. Experience has somewhat revised their assessment, and Angola has done some work in African languages. Mozambique began some research into using African languages but has not implemented literacy work in any of them.

It should be noted that Iraq did not really confront the above problem situations. The state declared literacy to be compulsory, and on this basis ran six short campaigns to eradicate illiteracy in the target groups (set by age) over three years, so in many ways the experience resembled a "one-off" strategy.

Using the "campaign series" strategy gives rise to a number of particular problems which do not affect the "one-off" strategy, most of them related the long duration of the series as a whole:

- the eventual target is very distant, so "eradication" as a slogan is not so effective;
- the mass mobilization afforded by the "revolutionary moment" tends to dwindle over time, making specific mobilization activities for literacy even more important;
- the process of keeping mobilization going constantly over so long a time is often beyond the state's capacities;
- teachers become harder to mobilize initially and to keep on the job in a voluntary capacity, given the long haul ahead;
- it is very easy for external factors (drought, war, or just other important programmes) to remove literacy's priority in practice along the way;
- classes, which are large, often begin to accumulate a lot of repeaters from previous campaigns;

- it is easy for the literacy activity to become a bureaucratic process, top-heavy and divest of a feeling of priority;

- the two moments, "literacy" and "post-literacy", in spite of the great necessity for running both simultaneously, contradictorily also have a negative effect by becoming a mixture of parallel programmes, which complicates organization, support and training, diffuses efforts and reduces focus on the literacy issue itself;

- the creation of a "literate environment" with large supportive concentrations of literate people is much slower and less effective.

The result is that the first two or three campaigns are usually very successful, but then things begin to fall apart. Thereafter, there are "dead periods" and "revivals", when the state again puts special weight on a given phase (e.g. to support a Party Congress or a big political change), or on a given moment (e.g. the period leading up to a national test). To keep things going smoothly, two things seem from experience to have been important: an ability to mark out new priorities for each campaign and concentrate on them, giving a constant feeling of progress and success; and the creation of strong political base structures with the responsibility for keeping up participation and enrollment (in Bhola's words, making the campaign the masses' own)(1983 p. 207). The latter factor is especially noticeable in the Tanzanian and Ethiopian cases.

In many respects, the successful campaigns in a series are close in **organization and content** to the "one-off" eradication campaign. A political focus is to be found in the material; literacy committees incorporating all the sectors in the society are set up; teachers are usually volunteers receiving moral incentives (and maybe a few material ones) who are given a short initial training; testing is usually centrally controlled; and a fairly formal direct follow-up is usually made available. Because of the conditions which led to the choice of a "campaign series" strategy in the first place, classes are usually rather large (15–30).

Ethiopia and Tanzania offer some interesting divergent experiences. Ethiopia's campaigns were structured in two short intensive phases each (three hours of classes per day!), one for the entire target group and the next for those who had not passed in the first phase. This made the time-sacrifice expected by the learners shorter in duration and allowed faster learners to graduate quickly, while the slower

learners had a period in a smaller class where they could be given more individual attention. The first intensive phase could then be taught by secondary school students in the long school holiday, which implied restructuring the school calendar slightly but avoided shutting down the schools. The second phase prevented the accumulation of repeaters in later campaigns. Tanzania, on the other hand, set up literacy tests after very long periods (after intervals of two or four years) which may have demoralized learners but made it easier to organize follow-up groups. Tanzania is interesting for having used political mobilization with a combined political and directly Functional curriculum. Through international support, it was able to pay a small allowance to voluntary teachers; it also used primary school teachers extensively for teaching literacy (with variable success – reports indicate that the former gave more attention to the Functional content and to adult methods than the latter).

From descriptions and own experience, it seems in general that the **teaching practice** in the literacy class is traditional and directive. The teachers have low educational qualifications, a very short specific training and a much longer previous primary school experience of their own, and so they tend to go back to the ways their own teachers taught them (Lind 1981).

Given the variety of organizational strategies, contents, language policies, et al., between the various cases, the **level of literacy** intended and reached in practice also diverges considerably from one to the other. Generally, the "literacy campaign" is intended to provide an equivalence to about second grade schooling, though Tanzania's "4th Level" was somewhat more advanced (those passing 3rd Level were also considered literate, however). This prescribed level, even if attained, does not guarantee any lengthy retention of skills, which makes the provision of **follow-up** crucial to the whole effort. The various follow-up possibilities are examined below (Chapter 10). The countries which undertake the "campaign series" strategy often have high illiteracy, deficient school coverage, and problems in printing and distributing written material, which make it difficult to create a literate environment to motivate, support, and justify the efforts expended. Some criticism has been directed at countries undertaking campaigns in this situation (Street 1985). However, Ethiopia offers a good example of providing follow-up coverage in classes (seven million enrolled), and Tanzania of combining with the literacy effort, the near-universalization of primary education in innovative ways, and the provision of accessible-level reading material on a wide scale. Certainly it is not very sensible to

run a series of campaigns to eradicate illiteracy if primary schooling does not universalize its coverage and no material is made available for reading over the same period.

References for this section:

General: Bhola 1982, 1983.
Tanzania: Kassam 1978, 1979; Johnsson et al. 1983.
Vietnam: Carron and Bordia 1985; Levin, Lind et al. 1979.
Ethiopia: Carron and Bordia 1985; Gumbel et al. 1983; NLCC of Ethiopia 1984; McNab 1989.
Mozambique: Fordham 1985; Lind 1981, 1985, 1988.
Angola: Marshall 1984.

9.6 Large-scale General Literacy Programmes

One may look upon the fairly large-scale literacy programmes which take place on the basis of a rather passive state approach to the issue of literacy, as falling between the active use of literacy for political change in campaign series and the active use of literacy for purposes of economic growth/development in selective form. As mentioned in Chapter 5, such programmes tend to apply some of the organizational principles used in campaigns, but are marked more by being a provision of access to those who want it than by a consistent use of mobilization methods. In Bhola's terms (1983, p. 207), such a programme is "politically cool" (even if in some cases it is called a campaign). Examples of such programmes are to be found in Bangladesh, Botswana, Brasil, Cape Verde, India, Kenya, Mexico and Zimbabwe, among others. The **objectives** put forward by the state for such programmes are fairly diverse, incorporating statements of human rights, political philosophy, cultural policy and economic strategy. The literacy access provided is often quite extensive, and one of the aims is usually the eradication of illiteracy.

The states involved fall into two groups. In a few cases, the government involved has a tenuous grip upon power and a low capacity to mobilize, but opens up literacy programmes as one way of making its presence felt and of promoting its legitimacy. In the remaining cases, the countries involved fall into the "middle income" category and have a fairly large mining/industrial sector, or at least an economy where illiteracy is not seen as representing an immediate major obstacle to growth, as illiteracy is concentrated among the peasantry and the unemployed. The economy is such that individuals in fairly

large numbers have a certain motivation for literacy learning, such as hopes of employment or promotion, or a motivation provided by the general level of literacy in the society. Migration to the cities is usually extensive, and the need to write letters makes itself felt.

In launching such programmes, the government makes public statements of support, and sometimes wide advertising campaigns are launched (e.g. MOBRAL in Brazil), but in reality a lot of responsibility for **mobilization** rests on the initiative of local literacy officials and there is little social pressure operating. This often results in a high initial enrollment, followed by a very large dropout. It has been noticed that where local figures of authority lend their approval and weight, better mobilization and lower dropout have been achieved (Lind 1985a; T. Coles, comment in correspondence).

Various levels of **organizational** structure are created, usually in the form of a department in the Ministry of Education, corresponding provincial departments, and trained and paid officials at local level with organizational and pedagogical functions. In particular sectors where illiteracy is felt to be a special problem (mines, plantations ...), some kind of special "Functional" programme is often set up in parallel with the more general programme, often on the initiative of the sector management. Furthermore, the government often "cedes" part of the programme to local NGOs, which may come to play a large part overall. In some cases, various ministries and NGOs have been given responsibility for different "bits" of the programme, which seems from experience to be a perilous option, resulting, without good coordination, in conflicting objectives and dispersion of effort and resources. Where one ministry is responsible for coordinating and directing the whole programme, the contribution of NGOs and of other ministries in its execution can allow for good use of the resources available.

Teacher mobilization takes place in a variety of forms, often relying on NGOs for a part of the teaching corps. Where such programmes continue over a lengthy period, it becomes hard to find volunteers and the state often ends up paying salaries, even if very low ones. However, almost everywhere initial **teacher training** remains short (one to two weeks), and in-service training provided by local officials remains important.

Such programmes, in a similar way to a "declining" campaign series, often end up with a large bureaucracy, an indefinition of aims, a high financial outlay, and not very satisfactory results. It may be noted that the attempt to reduce costs or increase coverage by putting a

large part of the teaching load on primary school teachers, as was once attempted in Kenya and Tanzania, has the disadvantage of launching traditional primary school methods into adult classes and causing further dropout (Bhola 1983, p. 120). Often the NGOs are most successful in finding and training teachers to use dynamic adult-centred methods in literacy. In many societies, a further caveat has surfaced in relation to teachers: if youths are recruited as teachers, adults are put off. This problem can be surpassed under conditions of general mobilization or high motivation, but it assumes importance in the "cooler" programme.

These literacy programmes make use of a general **curriculum** oriented around subjects of interest to adults with which the state feels comfortable: health care, agriculture, conservation, recreation, arithmetic ... (though where NGOs are involved, they may well use the opportunity to put over some of their own interests). Often the mixture of objectives drawn up for the programme, the wish to maximize use of the cost outlays, and the desire to make the curriculum interesting and useful to adults, result in an "over-packing" of contents – too many goals are expected to be reached by one literacy course. This can become especially aggravated where the programme uses the classes as a launching pad for parallel income-generating projects, as is the case in some countries. While in India (see Ch. 11 below) such a project proved essential to getting women to participate in one case, in others the parallel "practical" project becomes the main activity, and literacy learning suffers accordingly. This is not to underplay the general importance of practical projects with an educational content, but only to question whether **literacy** training is the best way to set them up. The results of an experimental project carried out in the Indian state of Andra Pradesh in 1972 are instructive in this regard. The project, Non-formal Education for Rural Women, containing literacy and mother/child care instruction. Three principal different designs were tested:

Group 1: a training programme with emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic, with the content derived from child health care issues;

Group 2: a training programme concentrating on practical demonstrations and information on mother and child health issues;

Group 3: a combination of literacy classes and mother/child care demonstrations and instruction.

> "The results were that Group 2 showed the greatest progress in the acquisition of knowledge and practices regarding mother/child care; Group 1 **alone** reached a stage of literacy sufficient to maintain the skills, and Group 3 did not gain as much mother/child care as did Group 2 nor as much literacy as did Group 1." (ICAE, 1979, p. 42).

An important aspect of the **pedagogy** of the programme is that its language, methods and contents are some of the principal means for maintaining student motivation, and hence attendance. Thus often more effort is put into methodology and curriculum design than is the case in campaign situations. A number of complications arise from this, some of them noted above. The quality of teaching becomes an important factor. In multi-lingual situations, where often there is a certain indefinition of language policy by the state, technical, political, and motivational factors can conflict in the choice of language. For example, it may seem best for technical and motivational reasons (fast learner progress) to use local languages, while for political and motivational reasons (access to employment, political participation, and higher grades of the school system, etc.) it seems best to use the official language or a "lingua franca". In the face of such problems, it would seem to be especially important to plan the whole educational project well in advance, notably as regards what is to happen **after** literacy, which should aid the definition of what language and contents should be incorporated in both the literacy and post-literacy components, as well as provide potential learners with a perspective on the matter. Among issues to be considered are, how and when to transit from the mother tongue to the official language, whether levels of adult education are to be considered equivalent to the school system's grades (and which), and whether and how testing should be done. In practice, unfortunately, the low priority of literacy and the relatively passive role of the state have resulted in programmes being launched without any prior decision and/or action on what should be done when the literacy students finish the prescribed textbook. (Botswana and Zimbabwe provide examples). Surely the lack of such planning acts to reduce individual motivation in a situation where this factor is most crucial.

References for this section:

The most concentrated sources of information are to be found in Bhola (1983), ICAE (1979), Carron and Bordia (1985). Other sources are Department of Non-formal Education-Botswana (1982), Lind et al. (1986), Fordham (1985), Dave et al. (1985).

9.7 Selective Small–scale Programmes

In many instances around the world, literacy activities represent a continuous on-going project on a fairly small scale. These, by the objectives of their promotion or by the nature of their promoters, are selective in one way or another. Although they do not make large-scale inroads on illiteracy, they have many of their own characteristics and can serve particular purposes not readily attainable by larger activities. We have already referred to those undetaken within the EWLP and the conscientization approaches, which were selective by their experimental or community–based character. In general, we may subdivide small-scale programmes into two corresponding main types:

- more or less decentralized state–promoted activities within particular areas or units selected for "development" or for pilot purposes; these may even originate from ministries or institutions (private or state–sponsored) other than the Ministry of Education;
- NGO or community–promoted activities (including cooperatives, trade unions, churches, women's organizations, etc.). This kind of NGO literacy project presents a great diversity of approaches, from traditional church involvement to popular education within liberation movements; but they are all limited in scale and selective according to the target group defined by each organization.

The results of the first type seem to depend on similar factors to the large–scale programme-exercise of mobilizational pressure within a facilitating organizational framework by the authority responsible, within the perspective for the learners that they will benefit from attending the classes. In this context, the provision of a programme organized in steps, which offers some form of organized post–literacy, is probably an important factor. Benefits on offer have often been characterized by their more "material" nature: better family production, higher wages, promotion, job security. However, some literacy activities within development projects have been planned in such a way that they are strongly boosted by the avenues which they open to increased collective self–management and participation in decision–making (Savaria 1979). One should note that the mere use of administrative pressures and putative material benefits can easily put off the illiterates, and that real changes and real participation are as always important factors.

The NGO/community position in relation to mobilizing and organizing literacy students is rather different. Although projects orga-

nized by the church, for example, may well seem to have the backing of a higher authority, one generally needs to look to other factors than "authority" to explain the successes reached; indeed the presence of authoritarianism may well explain some project failures. It seems that we must look to the factors of "the culture of participation" and often "the culture of resistance" as being most explanatory. Community and other NGOs operate as mediums for identification, collective participation, decision–making, and action. In some cases, group solidarity and effort might arise from common membership in an organization like a church or a club, even though the literacy *per se* does not take place against a background of social change or improved material conditions. In other words, individual interest is aroused by the combination of literacy with social activity and useful inputs, such as knowledge of health care or participation in income–generating activities. In both instances, the promotion and organization of a self–directing collectivity play a strong part.

In many instances, most important is the collective's engagement in an organized (even covert) resistance to oppression. Most developed in this sense is the whole popular education movement, especially in Latin America. But elements are to be found even in more traditional literacy groups, as the mere fact of poor people organizing themselves to learn something that society in one way or another has withheld from them, is an act of defiance and affirmation. That there is "space" for such challenges organized by NGOs is not axiomatic; it depends on the given historical moment in each society.

In general, small-scale or selective literacy programmes and projects have the potential to be intensive, in that existing resources can be more concentrated, at the same time as the project organizers can be close to the project area (in contrast to large–scale activities led by central government agencies). This permits more flexibility, less bureaucracy and more capacity to respond adequately and in time to the needs of the process. Given that such a project is integrated into a context that promotes motivation (organization, group identification, social change, social mobility, etc.) it is then also potentially possible to achieve better quality in the pedagogical process and the organization, and consequently better results. The contents of teaching materials and classes can be more directly linked to local realities and preoccupations.

The teachers can more easily be provided with advice and in-service training, and the learners' needs can more easily be identified and met; they can for example be divided into groups according to their

learning progress, the advantage of which has been indicated by many literacy practitioners.

These advantages of small–scale projects are **potential** and not an automatic consequence of limited scale. The social context, the degree of individual motivation, and the human and material resources for the project remain determinant.

Small–scale programmes, even run over a long time, obviously do not create any significant reduction of national illiteracy rates; except indirectly, as pilot projects, where the experience is later put to use on a wider plane. Pilot projects are useful to test varieties of strategies (as was done in Tanzania), teaching materials, teacher training models, and curricula.

9.8 What Powers Mass Literacy?

Our work has received some criticism as focusing too heavily on the state sector as a driving force for literacy, and various alternative proposals on how to non–governmentalize or privatize literacy provision have been made. However, first and foremost, our work was focused on the particular issue of how to do something of **large–scale** significance to tackling illiteracy as a problem affecting about one billion people. By this we do not mean to deny that "every little helps", but the perspective we were able to derive from experience in southern Africa was that the in themselves impressive literacy efforts going on in many places, and with some important results, were still only really reaching a small proportion of all illiterates, and making literate an even smaller number. And we were able with a fair degree of confidence to state that the problems involved were rather less of a pedagogical nature than of a motivational, mobilizational, and organizational nature. That is, that even good, relevant material and good, democratic teachers were of limited effect in bringing in, and retaining, literacy students, in the absence of other "driving" factors.

NGOs, even those specifically set up to promote literacy, rely heavily on the self–motivated individual, and have always lacked that prime factor underlying mass adult "literating" activities: the motor. Or, more concretely: who is going to mobilize the mass of self–employed peasants and artisans of the world to participate? Thus we doubt, for example, that substantial literacy efforts can be motored by market mechanisms, that is, through private literacy organizations selling literacy supply to meet individual or sectoral demand.

The idea that a private literacy organization could work out and sell a "development course" for a specific sector, into which learning of literacy skills is inserted, might have some effects per sector (which is no guarantee of any **large–scale** coverage). However, we should draw attention to other problems discussed in this book. In purely practical terms, literacy acquisition already represents a long and arduous course. Its integration into a course on something else entirely has often been most unsuccessful because the focus of learning and the objectives have not been clear or have conflicted. This was one important conclusion from the various attempts at Functional literacy. The course would also have to be formulated in terms which avoid the various problems of "a–political functionalism" involved in that approach.

On the other hand, when we speak of the involvement in mobilizing, supporting and organizing literacy activities, of "other sectors of society", we are thinking well beyond, although including, the formal structures of government (ministries and departments and their various subsidiaries). We include all kinds of national NGO of relevance to the issue, women's clubs, trade unions, cultural groups, churches, literacy service centres, peasant associations, cooperatives, literacy "interest circles" at local level, schools ..., to be identified (even created) according to the reality of each country/region/situation.

In the interests of achieving the intended results from their participation, this assortment of organizations, public, private, and civil, has to be "coordinated". At one level, of course, in many societies numbers of such organizations will be distinctly hostile to the government in power, and may well refuse participation, set up alternative programmes, or even organize resistance. We stand in no doubt that a thoroughly discredited and illegitimate regime would have zero chance of even starting the process in conformity with the guidelines we delineate. For instance, the South African regime through its Department of Education and Training – ex-Bantu Education – is trying to set up literacy centres in the black township areas, but it is given that the mass democratic movement will hardly be assisting!

However, where we refer to "coordinated" actions, the level of coordination implied is that of "collaboration" and not of government control over all organizations' initiatives or accounts. That is, each involved organization takes upon itself a certain area and degree of responsibility within the overall effort. This may be, mobilization of members to learn, or indication of how many mem-

bers are willing to teach, or assistance with local fund–raising, or offering experienced educators to supervise, or providing rooms as classrooms, or setting up teacher training courses, or putting the organization's local reading room at the disposal of the learners, etc. Some of these services may be sold to the literacy organizing body (state), and in some cases the same body may well agree to co–finance or completely finance certain activities carried out by collaborating bodies. This, however, does not represent "budget control", which the state would be most unwise to try to impose on non–state organizations.

From our experience, it is also important that the government's efforts at coordination do **not** restrict, divert, or undermine local initiative, local control, community decision–making, and community responsibility and involvement.

The collaboration we have in mind represents a voluntary sharing of responsibilities between the actors, in most cases probably with the delineation of overall policy in the hands of the state.

Here, of course, lies the problem. If the government in question is not able to mobilize the relevant non–governmental and community organizations to collaborate, it is probably not able to mobilize many of the potential literacy students in the society either. In such a case, it may be added, the government may well try to act exclusively, through the organs of state: MOBRAL was at one time an example of such an attempt.

As regards "coordination" within the organs of the state: where a government seriously wishes to promote mass literacy, the "coordinating agency" should not become the sole and uniquely responsible organ. In such case, of course, it could face a set of suspicious and potentially hostile departments of equal or greater status, which have no particular desire to be "coordinated". Effectively such an agency is only a designated executive representative of the highest ruling authorities (party, or cabinet, or council of ministers, etc.), and the attribution and coordination of actions, budgets, responsibilities, et al., is decided at that level, and not by the agency itself. In this sense, certainly, budgets can also be coordinated within the public sector.

Why all this emphasis on the state? As far as we are able to interpret literacy experience through history, mass literacy can come about slowly, under reasonably favourable conditions of economic growth and industrialization, largely through mass primary schooling. Those countries where the mass of illiterates is, are however still

showing little sign of such conditions arising; indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa, rather the contrary is happening (see World Bank, 1988). Put in simplistic terms, in favourable economic conditions, the economy provides a slow-running motor for the achievement of mass literacy. Even here the state has to do something positive to lubricate the motor: we may cite Salazar's Portugal or apartheid South Africa as being relatively conclusive examples that if the state actively discourages literacy, even in conditions of relatively constant economic growth and development, it does not just "come about". On the other hand, several good examples exist where the state – or, in earlier days, the state- allied church – took the issue seriously and was able to accelerate mass literacy, even in relatively unfavourable economic conditions. Our conclusion is, therefore, that the economy may itself power mass literacy, but the decisive "motor" for mass literacy is the state.

10. Post-literacy

So-called "post-literacy" is a potentially enormous field of activities which could include most of a society's educational resources. In this chapter, we will deal with post-literacy in a slightly more restricted sense, that is, the immediate follow-up to what a state or organization defines as its literacy programme (which may, of course, also cover people who have become literate through other channels, such as a few years of primary schooling).

As we have noted above, some kind of clear future access to a post-literacy follow-up is probably in itself a major motivational factor for bringing illiterate adults into literacy classes. At the same time, follow-up is enormously important for consolidating and extending literacy skills and for preventing relapse into illiteracy. Unfortunately, this latter aspect of the follow-up programme is often neglected: the organizers prepare the follow-up on the assumption that "literate" adults will join, and use it to move directly from "having learnt to read" to "reading to learn". In reality, the adults who enter such programmes are often marginally literate both because the literacy programme did not provide more than the rudiments of literacy in the first place, and because relapse has taken place in the interval between the adult leaving literacy and joining up again in "post-literacy". It can safely be said that the main concern of a "post-literacy" programme should be to be a "better-literacy" programme!

For the purposes of this sketch of post-literacy, we can conveniently divide the kinds of resources available into four: traditionally, their labels have been "formal, non-formal, informal", but it is probably better to subdivide the category "non-formal" into structured and semi-structured activities. There also exist, of course, a number of unstructured (informal) resources available in most societies which can be of use to new literates for retaining their skills, but we are interested in forms of specifically **provided** resources.

The "formal" post-literacy follow-up is easy to describe. It implies a near-direct entry into higher grades of the school system, through evening classes or through other specially arranged taught classes

using (light adaptations of) primary school curricula. Such programmes have the advantages of conferring directly equivalent certificates which give "credentialized" access to labour market opportunities, of the organizers being able to use (slightly adapted) normal teacher training programmes and (briefly retrained) professional teachers, and of requiring little extra effort for text-book preparation and curriculum development. Where it is difficult to organize anything else, this strategy is obviously preferable to no follow-up at all. However, the disadvantages are also apparent: unless such a programme is conducted in an environment of general social pressure for education, adults on becoming bored and humiliated are very likely to drop out. Furthermore, especially if the job-market is tight, potential participants may regard the struggle to get a certificate as valueless and never join at all; most primary school curricula are notorious for not being especially "relevant" to rural/adult/most people's needs at all. They are also organized around child psychology, interests, and learning rates (Dumont 1979).

A special problem also raises its head in multilingual societies – often the school system bravely strikes out at once in the official language, such as in Ethiopia, and it almost certainly goes over to the official language fairly rapidly; at the same time, literacy was conducted in the learner's mother tongue; so "post-literacy" becomes first an **extra** literacy component in a second language (the official one) before adults can be brought into the "main-stream" of schooling.

The non-formal "structured" post-literacy alternative covers a much wider range of possible activities: however, its distinguishing feature is that it consists in some kind of actively organized teaching programme specifically for adult new-literates. It is only sensible to suppose that "structured" post-literacy would follow on directly from its forbear, the literacy programme, in aims, methods, approach, and contents.

Where literacy has been used as a force for political change (in some kind of campaign form), various options are open. One often used, of course, is direct entry to the formal (but now "politicized") school system, as in Cuba, Vietnam, etc., where slightly adapted school curricula were used. Another is to continue a general "politicized" education with a curriculum specially structured for adults, as in Nicaragua, Mozambique, etc. A third is to create a more economically or "Functionally" oriented programme, as is being tried in Ethiopia, in effect using initially-learned reading skills to learn about directly-applicable "life skills" like agricultural techniques,

child-care, health, etc. In general, the mobilization applied for literacy is "carried over" to maintain attendance in post-literacy. Some countries have also set up a selective option, i.e. creating special boarding centres for community-selected adults, offering adult post-literacy courses in specific political and/or "Functional" skills and/or in further general education (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Mozambique all offer examples).

In the specific Tanzanian case, where the political campaign style was wedded to a work-oriented literacy content, it was logical to opt for a similar kind of mass "functional post-literacy" follow-up. In general, a work-oriented follow-up is clearly indicated as the major form of follow-up to work- oriented literacy. It should be added, however, that such "Functional" follow-up strategies represent one of the most difficult options. The tasks of researching, writing, printing, and distributing, and of finding and training teachers to teach, the vast number of different materials needed to be "relevant" both to each particular situation *and* to the literacy-content (and language) taught before, is a daunting and very expensive one. Dumont (1979) notes as just an initial problem to be faced, that a successful transition to a large-scale post-literacy programme should involve tripling national paper consumption within five years. If a more general programme is printed and the teacher is given the task of making the "relevant" application to local realities, this implies in its turn the use of highly qualified and trained teachers.

Both "formal" and "structured non-formal" approaches to providing post-literacy have to take into account also the attraction such programmes have for all the other multiple semi-literates and even thoroughly-literates in the society, who have often been pushed out of the (rather irrelevant) school system along the way and see the new programme as a welcome second chance to move ahead again, or to learn more useful skills. Especially the "structured" approach has to take careful note of the problem of equivalences to the formal school system. If the programme, though quite different to the school curriculum, offers an equivalent certificate allowing secondary school access (e.g. to evening classes), wage rises, etc., this may powerfully motivate literates to join – especially youths "pushed out" of school. Then an adult-oriented programme may find itself dealing with a youthful audience impatient for entrance into secondary school and mostly interested in academic credits. On the other hand, lack of equivalence may dissuade some new literates from joining, and anyway it is hardly sensible to leave out the youthful semi-literates of the society! In the case of Tanzania, furthermore,which deliberately created special "adult" Levels for adult education

without equivalence to school grades, it has been found that many "adult" places, at least in the residential post-literacy Folk Development Colleges, are still occupied by hopeful youths looking for some way forward to secondary education.

The third form of post-literacy, the "semi-structured non-formal", represents an organized project for putting learning materials into the hands of adults, without a direct teaching component. It is "semi-structured" in that it is still a project requiring research, planning, preparation, distribution, mounting of infrastructures, investment, and so on. High on the list are efforts to "create a literate environment" through making available reading/learning material at an accessible level for new literates: news-sheets, photostories, wall newspapers, posters, magazines, newspapers, booklets and books, rural libraries, reading rooms, and so on. Tanzania has a useful experience which has been transferred widely, of organizing voluntary "writers' workshops" to produce such material. Some efforts have also been put into reaching people by correspondence and distance courses, radio and television.

It is fairly clear that this third form of post-literacy is an indispensible complement to either the "formal" or the "structured" provision of follow-up. While it seems in general to be easier to mobilize new literates for post-literacy than illiterates for literacy, without there being constant access to interesting/useful (but ever-present) reading material and writing opportunities, the teaching of post-literacy is doomed to be a lost cause, a misused resource, and a process aimed at people who have inadequate support and motivation for attendance from their immediate environment. However, the mere provision of "semi-structured" follow-up is not enough to substitute a teaching programme, nor enough to motivate students fully for one that is provided. For post-literacy to develop the potential provided by literacy in any adequate way, the use of social pressures and mobilization techniques is still very necessary.

Among recent post-literacy experiences, those in Ethiopia are interesting in that all three forms of post-literacy are being implemented at the same time: "formal" (transition from literacy to formal schooling); "structured" (specifically adult post-literacy classes with more than seven million learners enrolled, as well as selective courses in boarding centres); and "semi-structured" (in this case, setting up Reading Rooms with accessible reading material for new literates). This has not meant, however, that there are no problems in creating a literacy sustaining environment in rural areas, and drop-out has been quite common.

Apart from the state's background objectives for setting up post-literacy, which normally represent an extension or logical broadening of the objectives underlying the literacy programme itself, Bordia (in Carron & Bordia (1985), p.186) has identified four programme-internal objectives for post-literacy in general:

> "**Remediation:** ...to remedy the deficiency of primary education and adult literacy programmes.
>
> **Continuation:** ...retention, reinforcement and stabilization of literacy skills, as well as their upgrading, and improvement of functional skills ... must continue to receive central focus.
>
> **Application:** ...the application of literacy and functional skills to living and working situation ... (so) people begin to participate in the development process.
>
> **Communitization:** ...the process of positive socialization and use of communication skills for individual and group assertion ... the means by which an individual acquires a new identity ... [through] group action for the improvement of the environment, vitalization of community forums or popular organizations for securing social justice."

While bearing in mind these objectives, it is important to note that the last is not likely to be a state objective unless it fits into the state's own goals: "it can never be said often enough that literacy teaching and post-literacy work are pointless unless accompanied by economic and social change" (Dumont 1979, p. 156). One of the most highlighted post-literacy objectives (Dumont 1979; Clement 1982; Carron & Bordia 1985), is to make it possible for new literates to participate fully in political, economic, socio-cultural and technical processes, so as to better control and improve their own lives. (This is of course an admission that literacy *per se* does not achieve this ...). Some successes in this regard have been reported from Unesco-supported Functional projects in Mali, where new-literates have *de facto* taken over certain new responsibilities, implying greater self-reliance (Clement 1982). Certainly education can serve to help the attainment of such goals, even in the face of state opposition, but it is perhaps still idealistic to imagine that post-literacy will generally be set up with such objectives, or will necessarily go far towards achieving them, unless they are a part of already occurring social and economic change.

It is also necessary not to regard post-literacy as the "real" chance to teach everything possible. As in a literacy programme, the "overstacking" of post-literacy curricula is just as liable to produce confusion, a sense of defeat, and an inadequate coverage of everything in them, preventing the reaching of **any** of the objectives proposed.

In strategic terms, given the importance of post-literacy in mobilizing for literacy and in validating literacy efforts in general, it has been suggested (Laubach 1947, Dumont 1979, Carron-Bordia 1985) that a sensible way of tackling the whole problem of literacy and post-literacy is to introduce both structured and semi-structured post-literacy opportunities **before** even starting the literacy project itself. While this is not useful in the case where a "one-off" literacy campaign is to be held (though of course preparation must be done beforehand even in this case), in all the other cases it seems a good idea, though no examples spring to mind! Certainly, the operation of the school system in most developing countries has already created a substantial clientele of fairly-literate and semi-literate people to make immediate use of such facilities.

11. Women's Experiences of Literacy Participation

The literacy data presented in Chapter 2 are only a few among many statistics which highlight the *de facto* discrimination against women in the field of education. In Africa and Asia the illiteracy rate among the female rural population is much higher than the overall country rates. In Latin America, which is more urbanized, poor urban women often constitute the single largest group of illiterates in a country, e.g. in Brazil and Argentina.

Even if girls in many Third World countries currently make up between 40 and 50 percent of the total enrolments at primary level, more girls than boys drop out before completing third grade. This is one of several reasons for believing that female illiteracy in particular is likely to be substantially underestimated.

Given this serious situation, suprisingly little has been reported or studied on adult literacy for women. It is an utterly underresearched area, which needs much more attention.

As pointed out in Chapter 8.2, women often constitute the majority of literacy learners. However, a process of social change, including community involvement and mobilization in favour of women's literacy, is needed to sustain female participation and overcome male resistance. A common problem is that literacy programmes, often integrated with other practical activities, seldom adapt to the real learning conditions of women. Not enough time and attention is given to the literacy component, and special provisions for facilitating women's full partication are seldom provided. Thus irregular attendance, high dropout rates and weak results are common everywhere. The successful examples which do exist demonstrate the importance of the process of participation and awareness-raising, and of creative organizational and mobilizational approaches. They also show that literacy is a potential empowering tool for women. Literacy in itself does not, however, present a way out of the existing submission of women, due to hindrances of poverty, religious and cultural traditions and the political milieu, which impose a strict enforcement of the economic and social subjugation of women.

Forms of patriarchial and economic oppression and subordination of illiterate women are nearly everywhere to be found, differing in accordance with the history and culture of each region and country. The education system introduced by the colonial powers was in different ways based on discrimination by gender, class and race. The traditional sexual divison of roles in the family, as well as in the society, excluded most girls from learning literacy through school. When girls did enrol in schools the aim of education was mainly to reinforce their subordination. Interviews with Mozambican women workers in a factory in Maputo, made in the context of a study on literacy conducted in 1985 and 1986 illustrate this clearly (Marshall 1988, p. 264):

> "I didn't study as a child. My father wouldn't let me. I don't know why – in the colonial days, schooling wasn't for women. "Go to school to do what?" That's how it was seen." (Albertina Carlos, 42 years old).
>
> "The girls who were sent to school were made to collect firewood and cultivate the fields. Only the boys were allowed to study. This was in Santa Maria Mission." (Alcinda Macuacua, 38 years old).

Even if the open discrimination practiced during colonial days is less common today, patriarchical ideologies and social systems that discriminate against women have persisted. This, in combination with the lack of provision for girls' and women's full participation in public education, has meant continued gender inequality. In fact, education systems of today reproduce not only the social class power structure, but also the existing gender differences. Nonetheless, girls' equal access to formal schooling is a right that must be pursued.

11.1 Constraints Preventing Women from Full Participation and Literacy Acquisition

In spite of the many reasons for women to participate in literacy classes, the multiple traditional and new roles of women prevent them from regular attendance and efficient learning.

The most immediate practical constraint is the lack of time. Female learners are overburdened with domestic tasks, i.e. not only child-rearing, but also cooking and cleaning, fetching of water and firewood, farming and cultivating and undertaking other subsistence and income-bringing activities. Just the fact of giving birth frequently, often every two years, leaves little time and energy for additional projects like literacy. For literacy class attendance and learning this

means frequent interruptions. Even when mothers attend classes they often bring their smallest children. Concentration on learning is obviously weakened when babies and toddlers are to be looked after during the lessons. These constraints are manifestations of the sexual division of labour and the reproductive role of women that impose upon them subordination and heavy domestic duties. Many other such manifestations, for example, self-denial, lack of self-confidence, and relative isolation from more literate environments are additional factors working against full participation or success in literacy classes.

An effect of women's relative isolation and deprivation as compared to men, is that they have had very little exposure to other languages than their mother tongue. This problem is especially salient when literacy is taught in a second language, as is often the case in African countries (e.g. Lind 1988).

Women are, moreover, directly discouraged by the attitudes of men, often including the male teacher, to their capacities in the classroom. Husbands and guardians at times even completely forbid women to take part in literacy classes (Riria 1983). Men are afraid that if women learn more than they themselves, it may expose their own ignorance and, above all, it may challenge their power position within the family. Such challenges to men can lead to violent reactions against women. Fear of husband's or other male family members' violent reactions against their independent activities often prevents women from participating in literacy (Stromquist 1989).

Even where female learners in favourable contexts have managed to acquire elementary literacy skills, the sustaining of literacy is often even more difficult for them than for men. Available reading material is often not designed for women's interests and needs. Women often have less access to reading material and less time to read it. For example, a study on effects of literacy in Kenya (Carron et al 1989) found that women tend to use their newly acquired literacy skills less frequently than men. The difference was particularly strong in the case of newspaper reading. This was partly related to women's generally lower degree of mastering Kiswahili, the language of newpapers, and presumably to their relative isolation from urbanized "literate" parts of the Kenyan society as compared to men. On the other hand, it was found that, in the case of calculation, the differences between the sexes were less pronounced, probably as a consequence of the involvement of all segments of the Kenyan society in the market economy.

The support and mobilization which took some female learners through literacy tends to dwindle when it comes to post-literacy, even where such a programme is provided. Through the multiple duties and constraints to which they are subject, women tend to be pushed out at a gradually increasing rate along the path through literacy and post-literacy. This is often worsened by too demanding and heavy curriculum designs (cf Lind 1988).

It is very seldom that special provisions and programmes geared towards meeting women's immediate practical needs are organized, for example child-care assistance during class time, or opportunities for receiving intensive instruction. In some cases, e.g. in Burkina Faso (Unesco/BREDA 1988) and Mozambique (Lind 1988), women have been offered literacy courses in boarding centres, away from competing demands and duties. Nonetheless, other problems have intervened in this context, such as poorly qualified tutors, shortages of food, uncomfortable living conditions, and insufficient programme time for functional literacy skills to be learnt.

11.2 "Integrated" Literacy Approaches Reinforcing Women's Reproductive and Subordinated Role

In many state-run, as well as NGO-sponsored, programmes the response to the difficulties involved in running efficient literacy courses for women in particular, is to integrate literacy classes into other meaningful activities. The idea is in principle justified. The need, hence the motivation, for literacy and numeracy skills is created or reinforced through programmes related to health care, family planning, nutrition, income-generation, etc. In this context literacy and numeracy should become necessary tools for learning more, controlling money and participating in community activities. However, this approach often implies that literacy instruction becomes neglected, since the participating women are expected to be involved in so many other activities at the same time. It is upsetting to observe that women organized in many integrated projects neither manage to generate income nor to learn literacy skills (Lind et al 1986).

The content of integrated non-formal education programmes in which principally women are involved has mainly addressed the reproductive role of women. The productive role of women has been given less attention. Technical skill training in agriculture as part of non-formal education activities continues to benefit men more than

women. The problem is how productive programmes with sufficient financial resources are to be developed for women, when their traditional reproductive role remains unchanged. Such programmes can instead add to the already excessive workload of women and subject them to a triple burden (Lind et al 1986; Stromquist 1987; Longwe 1988).

The promotion of literacy linked to income-generating projects, among women in particular, is very common today. However, most such projects do not generate income, due to underfunding and underqualified staff. The members (mainly female) of the groups initiating projects are not trained in marketing and management skills; they also often lack the technical expertise to produce the intended products; they do not (or do not know how to) fulfill the conditions for credit and receive hardly any management support for planning, implementing and developing the projects. An important disadvantage for many groups of this kind is precisely that most members are illiterate or semi-literate.

Priorities have to be defined according to each context. The result of not clearly defining priority objectives, short term as well as long term, is the dilution of learning effects. The results of the Indian experiment in Non-formal Education for Rural Women (referred to in Chapter 9.6) is instructive in this regard. The group which combined literacy classes and practical mother/child care instruction learnt less literacy and less health care skills than the groups which concentrated on either literacy or health care did.

11.3 Community Support and Political Mobilization for Literacy and Women's Emanicipation

In national mass campaigns, as well as more locally organized literacy programmes, the degree of female learners' participation in particular, has depended on community attitudes. While a superior and patronizing attitude among literacy organizers and teachers discourages interest, a democratic, open and involved attitude, treating the learners as equal adults, and creating an atmosphere of confidence, is found to have a positive influence on attendance and results. This is perhaps why local female teachers (not from the urban middle classes) for separate female learning groups often encourage learning and participation among illiterate women.

In many cases the active involvement of local leaders in favour of literacy activities has been crucial for the achievement of high levels of participation and learning. For example, in 1971, in Tanzania, the local leaders on the island of Mafia insisted that men **and** women were to participate. Separate classes for men and women were organized. In spite of feudal muslim traditions of oppression, the great majority of illiterate women and men enrolled and completed the programme successfully. Mobilizing visits by national leaders were followed up by the appointment of an Area Commisioner, who was a committed adult educator himself.

Why this was so important was explained by a female learner, who was asked what her husband thought about her participation in literacy classes:

> "Yes, he grumbles a bit like men do. Some men are very worried, and they don't let their wives attend classes. But it is too late, I think. When the Area Commissioner held a meeting here both men and women were asked to come. We didn't dare to, in the beginning. But the cell leader had brought his wife, and she came back to fetch us. The Area Commissioner had complained that so few women were present and said that he would not start the meeting until everyone had met up. These classes have meant a lot to us." (translated from Rydström, 1973, p. 59)

When commitment is manifested in the combined efforts of both national and local leaders with authority, as in this case, the effect is very powerful.

Initiatives by certain NGOs, such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, have also been successful in organizing literacy projects for women. These cases show that literacy becomes meaningful when it has been linked to making women aware of their oppression, and at the same time to organizing and training them for effective self-reliance activities. Other crucial factors were commitment and sensitivity to needs; the organization of credit arrangements; and the organizational and mobilizational skills gained through active participation in the process (Fordham 1985; Stromquist 1987).

11.4 Potential Liberating Effects of Literacy for Women

A number of observations further indicate that women's participation in literacy frequently gives rise to new situations conducive to struggles around women's liberation. Women integrate into a new

reference and support group. In the literacy class situation, the woman is in fact not available to perform certain domestic tasks at literacy class time, which necessarily rebound to the responsibility of other family members, sometimes male. She becomes able to manage new skills, which give her a new potential role in the family. The mastering of new skills may also give her greater opportunity for paid employment, leading to relative economic liberation. Where new skills enable her to produce an increased surplus from her agricultural labour, however, this may not lead to any change in her economic status, if her husband controls its use or distribution. This may lead to tensions in the family (Johnston 1984).

Preliminary findings from a questionnaire sent out in September 1988, by World YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) to all of its member associations confirm such liberating effects of literacy. The responses show that:

> "Women who received literacy training are more respected in the community and at home. They have better skills in their search for jobs and can therefore earn higher salaries. They realize that some jobs which are traditionally considered to be for men only are for them too. They have better capacity to run small businesses and keep records on their own. They are strengthened in leadership roles in women's groups. Their political awareness, participation, and organizational skills are enhanced. They gain better understanding of their rights. And they are in a much better position to help their children with their schoolwork." (WYWCA 1989).

11.5 Conclusions for Future Action

The social and political context determines when and how literacy programmes are relevant for women. Illiterate women would like to become literate, but relatively few manage to satisfy this wish. The constraints are often overwhelming, such as time-consuming duties, shortcomings in the design of the literacy programmes offered, and men's resistance. It is important not to overload the curriculum or to expect women to be involved in a variety of different programme activities at the same time.

Mass literacy campaigns, genuine political priority and community support for literacy have been most successful in mobilizing women to participate and complete literacy programmes. Men have in these campaigns been pressurized to accept women's participation in literacy and in other social, economic and political activities. In response to women's long-term needs, awareness-raising on women's rights is important to promote within the framework of literacy programmes, and indeed, this contributes to such programmes achieving success.

There are no simple solutions without profound changes in the sexual division of roles and labour. The problem is not only to mobilize women. Men's attitudes and behaviour, in particular, must be addressed in order to overcome fundamental constraints preventing women from full participation in literacy activities.

The need to focus future literacy activities and studies on women's particular needs and constraints is obvious. Strong promotion of action research combined with training of researchers, trainers and instructors is recommended, as well as systematic reviews of available reports and research on female learners' specific situation.

12. Conclusions and Reflections on Existing Experience

12.1 Factors in Adult Literacy Success

In this chapter we will try to synthesize the most important factors necessary for achieving positive results in adult literacy programmes. Most of these factors refer to the level of policy and socio-economic conditions, and not specific technical designs of a programme. This arises from a consideration of under what circumstances the poor and underprivileged illiterate population might or might not respond to the pressures for, or feel the need of literacy. If there are no concomitant perspectives of improved political, social or economic conditions for the population, even with literacy skills, why should the illiterates then use their time for literacy classes?

The Declaration of Persepolis stated:

> "Successes were achieved when literacy was linked to man's fundamental requirements, ranging from his immediate vital needs to effective participation in social change." (Bataille, 1976, p. 273).

We have argued throughout this book that this factor underlies success in achieving and maintaining literacy, whatever type of programme or activity is involved. However, numerous other factors influence the relative success of a literacy activity, depending on its objectives, scavle and form of implementation, and who organizes it. The following matrix shows one way of classifying the different combinations of activity and the respective actors:

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:	Political	General	Economic
STRATEGY:			
One-off campaign	State	-	-
Campaign series	State	-	(State)*
Large programme	-	State + NGO	State
Small programme	NGO	NGO/State	State/Enterprise

* Only the partial exception of Tanzania.

As summarized in the above matrix, there have essentially been three accelerated strategies which have moved towards the eventual eradication, or significant reduction, of illiteracy at the national level: the one–off campaign of short duration; the rather longer campaign series; and the large–scale programme, of fairly undefined, but longer, duration. From the specific point of view of large–scale literacy results, the following factors have been identified for relative success:

a) Today, it is virtually axiomatic that **the state has to be the prime mover** in promoting and organizing such literacy activities. In the past, when the church constituted a strong moral and temporal parastatal authority, it was able to mobilize similar results. In some countries, it is now probable that Islam would be able to dynamize adult literacy on the same terms, as it has to a considerable degree done in Koranic schools for children.

b) On the basis of this "axiom", numerous writers have recently put the emphasis on **national commitment** or **political will** (Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Noor 1982; Bhola 1982, 1983; Fordham 1985; Carron and Bordia 1985; Torres 1985). This factor does not refer to mere policy declarations on combatting illiteracy, but mainly to the integration of literacy activities into active socio–economic change (as part of a general programme for political change, or of the national development plan), and obviously also to the allocation of sufficient energy and human and financial resources to the literacy endeavour.

> "The success or the failure of a literacy activity does not ultimately derive from economic or technical issues, but rather from the existence or not of a firm political will with capacity to organize and mobilize the people around a literacy project." (Torres 1985, p. 90)

> "It is necessary that the various actors within a society come together to develop a national consensus for the eradication of literacy and that they forge this... into the nation's political will." (Bhola, 1982, p. 240).

> "Group pressure reinforced by community encouragement induces learners to succeed." (Noor, 1982, p. 180).

It derives from this that the state itself must both thoroughly assume the project and have the power and legitimacy to mobilize and maintain the illiterates' involvement in it. This is not to say that NGOs and mass organizations do not have a very significant potential role to play; but in the absence of supportive state engagement, their role will be severely limited.

c) As part of the above "national commitment", many writers have identified the following factors:

- **Popular mobilization and participation, social equality and equal rights** (Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Bhola 1982; Torres 1985). This factor refers to the general policy of a government and to the specific literacy policy adopted. Strong initial individual motivation for literacy is not enough to maintain regular attendance and achievement. Continuous activities aiming at mobilization of the participants are required. The most essential is to create an atmosphere of literacy being a true priority.

"If literacy programmes are imposed on people and are not related to total development and/or local conditions, they have little chance of improving people's lives; they should encourage the skills of participation and self-management ..." (ICAE, 1979, p. 12).

"Popular literacy must not be seen as a welfare service or as a concession. It must instead be viewed as a people's right and consequently as an obligation by the progressive sectors and the revolutionary movement." (Torres 1985, p. 100).

- **A broad conception of literacy – including its economic, social, political and cultural dimensions** (Bataille 1976; Unesco 1980; Noor 1982; Bhola 1982). Experiences show that it is difficult to achieve economic objectives directly through literacy activities; the link exists, but without other economic and political changes literacy does not in itself create development, nor does it mobilize adults for literacy.

"... the content of learning materials should be culturally oriented and... relevant to adult perceptions... topics designed to be too specific to functional work needs may alienate..." (Noor 1982, p. 179).

d) **Other more organizational and structural factors**, that determine the managerial implementation of the policy-oriented factors, have been found to be crucial for the success or failure of literacy, such as:

- **Mobilization of available resources of the state, socio-political organizations and the people** (ICAE 1979; Saraf 1980; Unesco 1980; Bhola 1982). This implies the involvement, not only of educational services for literacy but also of a broad range of support from other sectors of the society, including volunteers, mass media, NGOs, health and agriculture services, etc.
- **Central coordination** of various ministries, institutions, trade unions, organizations, etc. (ICAEF 1979; Bhola 1983). This coordination is needed in order to ensure a multi-sectorial involvement and joint actions in favour of literacy and post-

literacy. A single central coordinating body is needed but local responsibility and flexibility must also be ensured. The organization must correspond to the literacy objectives and have the capacity to sustain a high level of mobilization.

- **Post-literacy and other follow-up opportunities** (Laubach 1947; Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Unesco 1980; Bhola 1982; Fordham 1985; Carrôn and Bordia 1985; Ryan 1985). Without follow-up, either through continuing non-formal education or through links to formal education, retention of literacy is not possible. Other opportunities for applying recently acquired literacy skills must also be created in order to avoid relapse into illiteracy. As Fordham (ed. 1985) concludes:

> "... literacy must be integrated with vocational training and/or general education and/or political action and/or productive self-reliance work projects." (p. 23).

Ryan (1985) comments:

> "The solution to the problem of post-literacy is the development of a literate and literacy-sustaining society. This is not a narrow technical task; it involves a profound cultural change in the information needs people have and the manner in which they seek to satisfy them." (p. 3108).

An important finding is that it is essential to plan and introduce organized post-literacy **before** or at least at the same time as the actual literacy activities. This then becomes a strong motivational and mobilizing factor for literacy as well as a literacy-sustaining factor.

Access to formal education for literacy and post-literacy graduates is important as one of many ways of providing follow-up. This has, however, implications for the choice of the language of instruction in literacy and post-literacy. Transfer from a local to the official language is often required in multilingual countries.

e) In alliance with these factors, an evident parallel step needs to be taken on state initiative:

- **A dual strategy, combining the universalization of primary education (UPE) and adult literacy** outside of school (ICAE 1979; Fordham 1985; Carron and Bordia 1985; Ryan 1985). This strategy has been fully adopted by Unesco in its current Medium-Term Plan 1984-1989, which stresses that both the extension and renovation of primary education **and** renewed

efforts for out-of-school literacy work have to be ardently pursued if illiteracy in developing societies is to be eradicated.

* * *

We have noted that both the campaign series and the large-scale programme approaches have some difficulties in living up to these factors, the latter rather more than the former. The programme in itself is usually structured within an evolutionary perspective of social change and thus it is hard to mobilize for it and even harder to maintain the necessary motivation and mobilization over a long time. This represents the danger of large-scale investments with little return. The campaign series usually takes place in a situation where pace of social change is in itself mobilizing, but again, over time both state and individual interest and motivation can drop off. This strategy requires well-trained full-time staff at the base and much dedication, due to the long duration that the consecutive stages imply. This also means that the volunteer teachers need permanent support and moral and material incentivation. Most important of all is the creation of organs with political authority to keep things under way. The careful selection of targets and success in reaching them also help to keep up awareness and enthusiasm about progress and achievement.

Since the possibilities for implementing one-off campaigns for the eradication of illiteracy are limited to very special conditions that very seldom exist (see Ch. 9.5.2), the series approach represents an alternative campaign strategy in a situation of scarce resources, notably of qualified people.

In the many cases where the overall conditions in a country or a region are not conducive to the launching of campaigns, it is hardly recommendable or sensible simply to lay down all activity and give up. Amongst all the findings discussed above, examples are shown of reasonably successful "cooler" programmes, and many of the prescriptions for successful work are equally applicable to such programmes. As Bhola (*International Review of Education*, 1984) demands:

> "If ... politics do not permit a mass-scale national literacy campaign or programme, what should the policy-makers do? They should do the second-best possible ... " (p.261).

From our perspective, we see it as being important in almost all cases, and especially "second-best" ones, that the activities prepared be preceded by small pilot projects which do some kind of organizational and pedagogical feasibility testing. As T. Coles succintly put it in his comments on a draft of this book:

"... the approach has to be tailored to the particular political, social and cultural conditions prevailing in each country. It will only work where this is done."

f) **Other key issues**

Our conclusions above focus mainly on non-technical factors because of our conviction that literacy is rather a political than a technical issue. Nevertheless, technical "inputs" such as methodology, content, material, or financing, are not negligible factors in the success of literacy efforts. Our own experience in the field has pointed up the shortcomings caused by deficiencies in these aspects. We know that it is crucial that there are enough primers and manuals and that they are distributed to the right place in time; that the methods of teacher training have to be adequate; that the financing of teacher training, teaching material, transport and so on, must be sufficient to cover the needs; that funds can be raised by local efforts but that usually this does not provide enough for complete coverage of costs. However, it is not the superabundance of such resources and the perfect elaboration of methods and primers that by themselves determine good results in quality or in quantity.

Nonetheless, in the context of a favourable situation of high motivation and good mobilization, there are still a number of important issues to be taken carefully into consideration for the success of the literacy endeavour, among them:

The time factor

Compared with primary school, adult literacy classes take place under difficult conditions. The adult learners are usually not obliged to attend classes and can abandon them whenever they choose. Further, adult students have duties and obligations which often conflict with regular attendance. The scheduled number of hours for adult literacy instruction has usually to be low in relation to the equivalent primary school schedule for learning literacy and numeracy (Gray, 1969; Ryan, 1980). Irregular attendance reduces the already limited time available for learning literacy and interferes with the logical progression of the curriculum. This results in a paradox:

"Many adults require more time to achieve literacy than classes provide. On the other hand, increasing the duration of courses by dividing them into stages has usually had the effect of increasing dropout." (Ryan 1980, p.63).

This issue has to be taken carefully into account in preparing the curriculum and deciding on the language of instruction. Once again, motivation is the key. The Ethiopian approach of "two-stage" classes (see Ch. 9.5.3) offers an interesting model. In the Mozambican case (Lind 1988) the objectives were set too high, the stages were made too long, and many learners ended up repeating the stages they did not pass, so finishing and gaining a certificate receded into the far distance. We believe it is most effective for the learners to confront a reasonably short time sacrifice and be tested at a low skill level with success, as this motivates them to commit themselves to further learning and continue into a follow-up learning stage.

Choice of language

It is obvious that the existence of a widely shared language has been a favourable factor in most countries that have carried out successful literacy campaigns/programmes, but it is not a sufficient condition, nor is its absence fatal. Ethiopia has shown that mass literacy is possible in many languages in a highly multilingual country.

The choice of language for literacy teaching derives partly from national language policy and from the objectives of the process. Nonetheless, literacy conducted in a second language is difficult and time-consuming, and can lead to demobilization if there is no strong motivation among the participants to learn this language. It is obvious that the more distant this language is from the mother tongue and the less common it is in the vicinity, the more difficult it will be to teach and learn in it. The conclusions of a study made in Ethiopia before the revolution are also interesting in this respect:

> "Test results indicate that learning to **read in a foreign language** is not the decisive handicap which might have been expected." (Sjöström & Sjöström 1982, p. 153).

Given that the mother tongue (or a language the learner is fluent in) is best *a priori* for learning (Gorman 1977; Ryan 1980), it is still not worthwhile to teach literacy in this language if there is no written material in it, or if there is no organized programme for providing such material or for teaching the transition from this language to another language widely used for reading and writing.

It is certainly more expensive on the short term to prepare materials and teachers in many different languages. However, a highly inefficient programme ends up in costing (in many different senses) altogether too much in the long term. Again, the crucial factor which needs to be investigated in formulating the language policy for literacy is what language people are motivated to learn in. For

economic, cultural, or language status reasons, some people might display resistance to learning literacy in their home language, or in other circumstances, to learning in another language (Baucom 1978; Lind 1988). A particular choice of language policy may be correct under the circumstances that reign at one time, but need to be changed as the situation changes.

Mobilization and support at local level

A favourable attitude and active support on the part of local figures of authority, such as district administrators, chiefs, literacy and education officers, enterprise managers etc., have been shown to exercise a powerful mobilizing influence, to the extent that their absence can harm even a high-intensity campaign accompanied by general mobilization, while their presence can compensate for the rather "cool" atmosphere surrounding a low-priority programme.

> "In Botswana it was noticeable that where a district non-formal education officer was truly committed to the programme, classes were well attended and there was sustained enthusiasm. Where the dedication was lacking, the programme suffered." (T. Coles, comments on draft).

From our experience, it is important that the local community assume, and really be given, as much responsibility as possible for mobilizing teachers and learners, providing places to study, organizing the timetable and the raising of funds, etc., i.e. that the community really has executive authority in relation to the literacy programme.

Mobilizing and training of teachers

Without an atmosphere of priority or a campaign, it is difficult to maintain the mobilization of non-paid voluntary literacy teachers. Not even the paying of an allowance guarantees constant participation, unless it is an "acceptably" high amount. Once allowances have been paid, it is extremely difficult to return to a non-paid volunteer scheme.

If it is decided to pay the literacy teachers effectively, then it is worthwhile investing in the costs of a longer and more solid initial training. Otherwise it is better to choose a short and mobilizing training. In both cases, but especially the latter, it is necessary to mount a network of pedagogical and organizational support services and in-service training.

Contents and methods of literacy training

Several studies show that "the need felt by a learner for literacy is more important than the curriculum's content" (Noor 1982, p. 179).

As long as the content is not infantile or completely unlinked to known reality, it seems that the focus of the theme(s) does not determine the results. Contents that concentrate on teaching literacy but which cover multiple aspects of interest for the adult learners are preferable to contents on solely production techniques or solely political-ideological questions. A problem common to many literacy programmes is a too heavy curriculum, both as regards its wide range of topics and themes and as regards its technical complexity - which in too many cases have often gone far beyond what it is possible to achieve in one literacy course for beginners.

The planned teaching method may vary considerably, it seems, as long as the adult learners are treated with respect and patience, without an infantile and patronizing approach. It seems important that the chosen method be within the reach of the teachers, otherwise they will relapse even more easily into the methods they remember from their own primary school experience. Several studies have concluded that the teachers' attitudes to their work, and their rapport with their community, are more important than their formal qualifications or pedagogical training (Unesco/UNDP 1979; Sjöström & Sjöström 1982).

Costs and resources

Literacy activities require allocation of sufficient resources whose amount must be calculated not only on the basis of the literacy programme as such, but also in terms of providing follow-up and accessible reading material for new literates in sufficient quantity. It is therefore important not to consider adult literacy as a cheap and easy road to development.

On the above grounds, it is easy to see that the reduction of the "inefficiency" of the activities needs careful attention, especially as regards:

- teacher drop-out
- poor attendance and high drop-out among the learners
- the setting of too high expectations in the literacy objectives, resulting in high failure rates and subsequent demobilization
- large-scale relapse into illiteracy and the non-use of learning in practice.

All this is possible to avoid to a certain extent in a situation of general mobilization of the society for literacy, or at least of concentrated mobilization of the teachers and learners involved (although almost all longer-term literacy activities suffer these problems to

some degree); also important is a careful (even pessimistic) elaboration of the curriculum adapted to a realistic learning pace.

Literacy must be simple, rewarding, and necessary.

The role of national NGOs

The strength of NGOs is their community identification and base. In the case of the existence of government programmes, NGOs can perform a useful supplementary and complementary function, by mobilizing their own constituency to participate as teachers and learners, by reaching more marginal groups, and by performing a refining role in suiting the overall programme to the local conditions and needs. In all cases where collaboration is intended, it is important to define the precise areas and levels of responsibility, to avoid waste, duplication of efforts and resources, and unnecessary bureaucratic conflict and intervention. Ideal collaboration would make full use of the respective strengths and capacities of all parts.

The NGO obviously assumes a completely different role where no state programme exists, or where the NGO launches literacy activities which are deliberately alternative or opposed to the state and/or its educational programmes. In such cases, the level of success depends on the NGO's real rooting in its community and its ability to avoid repression, while it will have to undertake itself all the various stages of organization, mobilization, development of curricula and materials (where used), training and teaching. Obviously, in almost all such cases, the NGO impact will be numerically limited.

While the NGO will certainly need funds to carry out its activities, its strength is its responsiveness and flexibility within local conditions, which may ill accord with the interests and rules of donor agencies which may seek to become involved.

12.2 Research Needs

As mentioned in Chapter 3, research into adult literacy is recent, not very frequent, and often not very coordinated. Research needs are therefore to be found in most areas, often requiring a multi-disciplinary approach. Bernard (1984, p.10) points out:

> "There is need for research to be used more creatively, more often, and with more precise focus. Research activities can cover all aspects of the literacy problem, but none will work effectively if used for too diffuse a purpose or if the data produced are inappropriate for answering the question asked."

Different research approaches each have different potentials that are needed for different purposes. Surveys, tracer studies, implementation analysis, and qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation studies are all relevant if the framework and design are adapted in a sensitive way to reality. Participatory and action-oriented research seem to be particularly suitable for studying adult literacy, given the role of organization and mobilization in success. It is essential that future literacy research consider the need for data to be disaggregated to reflect gender differences, as problems and solutions in literacy are not the same for men and for women. Up to now, with the exception of projects specifically focused on women, there has been a tendency to ignore the difference.

Pilot projects carefully followed all the way through offer important possibilities to combine research with adaptation and innovation.

We also consider it most important to focus on tensions and contradictions that arise in relation to literacy activities, in the form of conflicting aims, objectives, and motives, between the promoters, financers, policy-makers, teachers and participants. The political nature of literacy needs to be taken into account in research, and the struggles around the process must be considered in order to provide a proper understanding of the problems and successes and their implications.

Finally, it is essential that research on literacy originate and be rooted among those directly concerned in the countries of the Third World. On the one hand, this means that it is important to strengthen research capacities in the developing countries themselves, and on the other, that it is important to facilitate the compilation and dissemination of existing - mostly unpublished - studies that have been done by third world researchers. Since the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Iran ceased to function, and as Unesco's resources are being reduced and withdrawn, the need for new "reseach clearing houses" for adult literacy has become urgent.

An extensive inventory of research needs is covered in ICAE (1979, pp. 115–118), so here we will limit ourselves to what we consider to be a few crucial areas whose research is essential to improving literacy work in the Third World:

The impact and use of literacy

How do new literates – women and men – use their newly-acquired skills in rural areas?

a) if reading and writing material is made available;

b) if it is not specifically made available?

What changes or actions promote a higher retention and use of literacy? (Such as the introduction of basic services, rural libraries, cooperatives ...).

What is the impact of literacy, beyond the simple acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, on the learners, women and men, their families and their community?

What factors determine retention and use of literacy? What is the difference between those who relapse into illiteracy and those who sustain it, in similar settings?

Language

Does high student motivation for learning literacy in a second (official) language justify teaching directly in this language, rather than starting in the mother tongue and transiting later?

When is it best to start the transition from mother-tongue to second-language literacy? How long does it take to complete the transition sufficiently? What facilitating factors can be provided in the environment? What methods are best?

What is the situation of retention of literacy in a second language?

Mobilizing and training of voluntary teachers

What kind of low-cost or non-material incentives are most effective in maintaining motivation among volunteer teachers?

What forms and contents of in-service training are most needed and most effective?

What factors could incentivate more women to volunteer as teachers? Women instructors/separate training classes/pre-school or child-care services at training courses/other?

The methodology of training volunteer literacy teachers in short courses supplemented by in-service training also needs to be developed through practice and research.

Curricula, contents, methods

What are the different necessary stages of literacy, their distribution in time and content (reading/writing exercise level, combination of literacy/numeracy, introduction of other practical/Functional/ideological themes)? This question relates to the fundamental research issue of how adults learn to read and write, which needs more attention!

What positive links can be made to traditional culture and religion in the contents to motivate learners and root learning in familiar themes?

Although the methodology of literacy teaching has been researched to some extent, it still needs more attention, especially as regards the conditions of heterogenous classes.

Drop-out

What experiences do the illiterates and new literates have of literacy classes? To what extent do the teaching methods and contents encourage or discourage learners from continuing the classes?

"Lack of time" is a common reason given for irregular attendance, dropout, or failure to enrol. What good organizational strategies have surpassed the real lack of time? Are there deeper reasons for dropout, such as psychological barriers among rural men or women?

Quality versus quantity

Is there really a tension between quality and quantity in literacy work? Do smaller-scale projects actually manage to concentrate resources and mobilize participants in such a way that they achieve qualitatively much better results than mass campaigns or large programmes?

Post-literacy

Research in the form of pilot projects on whether the prior introduction of access to post-literacy classes and to other post-literacy resources actually serves to mobilize illiterates for a forthcoming literacy programme, would be extremely interesting for future literacy strategies.

Similar pilot experiences could test which kind of follow-up (in a situation of choice) new-literates and primary school dropouts in fact prefer, which produces greater retention of literacy skills, and which serves best the various "macro- objectives" which are/have been proposed for post-literacy.

Sponsorship and organization of literacy

What is a suitable combination of centralized and decentralized policy-making, organization and control? What is the role of the central government in relation to NGO activities in different contexts?

What dangers and benefits are represented by external aid to a literacy project, in terms of motivation, objectives, dependency, sustaintability or integration with other policies or programmes?

Should literacy programmes be separate, or integrated as a process component of content-based programmes?

Obviously, the priority among research topics depends on in what context and for what purpose the research is to be done. The complexity of the field and of each context implies that generalizations are not always possible or desirable. The practical implications of research may also vary for the same reasons. We cannot expect to arrive at a global adult literacy cookbook! Research serves best as an integrated component of the planning, implementation, and critical evaluation of adult literacy activities. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to create conditions for the exchange of experiences and research results among literacy practitioners and researchers at inter-regional and international level, especially on the basis of South-South contacts and networks, in order to share learning and improve the practice of literacy. As someone once said to us during a literacy trainer training course:

> "We all know that we learn from our mistakes, but is it really necessary for us to create mistakes in order to learn from them?"

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Adult Literacy in The Third World:
A Rewiew of Objectives and Strategies

Agneta Lind & Anton Johnston

This book is a review of the approaches that have been applied in the Third World to spread literacy on a large scale among adults. It is published now in revised form by SIDA to mark the United Nations' International Literacy Year 1990.

In the world today there are nearly one billion adults who are totally illiterate and another billion who are functionally illiterate: the large majority of them being women. The authors argue that literacy is a human right and need in our time, and that large-scale efforts should be made to generalize literacy skills. They identify the principal agent able to act on that scale as being the state.

The authors examine the conditions under which the state would be able or willing to mobilize people to participate in literacy activities, and analyse why and how it has been done. They review the political, economic and operational issues involved as well as the successes and failures which have occurred.

The book has already been warmly received by literacy workers and researchers, with comments such as "a very balanced state of the art report", "a valuable compression of much of the current literature" and "a thoughtful and thorough piece of work".

Agneta Lind and Anton Johnston have lengthy experience of literacy work in a number of countries, notably in Africa. They both now work in SIDA's Education Division, having recently finished their doctoral theses on different aspects of education in Mozambique.

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